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GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG;

OR,

THE OBLIGATION AND THE ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY, SERIOUSLY URGED UPON YOUNG PERSONS,

IN CONNEXION WITH
Eccles. xii. 1.

BY THE
REV. GEORGE W. LEYBURN,
Late Missionary in Greece.

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A FEW WORDS TO MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER PERSONS WHO FEEL AN INTEREST IN THE RELIGIOUS WELFARE OF THE YOUNG.

THE object proposed, in the preparation of this volume, has been to bring the claims of religion to bear upon the consciences and hearts of the young, in the way of direct personal address, and in its relation to their present age and circumstances. It is the obligation not merely of a consecration to God, but of an early consecration, which is designed to be enforced in these pages—I could only have desired a greater competency for the fulfilment of so important a task.

I trust that there are many intelligent and thoughtful young persons who will be disposed, of themselves, to read what is here contained. But whatever may be the execution and intrinsic adaptation of such a book, a great deal will depend, as to its utility, upon the co-operation of those who have opportunities of access and influence with the juvenile part of the community. Therefore is it, dear brethren and friends, that I here address myself to you. The minister may find occasion for such a book, as an auxiliary to his labors for the youthful portion of his charge. Coming from his hands, we might hope that it would be read under the favoring influence of that affection and veneration which young hearts are apt to cherish towards a faithful pastor.

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And might not a suitable book of this kind be read by Sabbath-school and Bible-class teachers, and even by teachers of our ordinary schools, to their scholars, with the hope of good results? The division of this volume into chapters of moderate length will, I trust, be found convenient for the purpose just suggested.

And if you are a parent, may not your loved ones be led to peruse a book of this kind, by their regard for you, where a higher reason would not operate? But if not this, why not read it to them? Who that has had experience does not know the value of religious reading, orally practised, in the family? Can the truth find a better medium or accompaniment than the tones of a revered father's, or of a loved mother's voice?

And may the solid religious reading of a former age never be wholly superseded! Let us not substitute auxiliary means, however valuable as such, for the main instrumentalities. Let us remember that it is generally the direct application of truth to the heart, which is blessed to a saving end.

But most of all, dear brethren and friends, I invoke the aid of your prayers, in order to the success of this effort. Remember that religion has, in itself, no charms to the natural heart of your child, your scholar, your young friend; and that there must be a divine influence to make any means effectual. Indeed I should regard it as a very important result, if parents, teachers, and other friends of the young, by the consideration of the subject in the lights in which it is here presented, should themselves be led to feel a deeper impression of its importance.

And what department of Christian labor more interesting or more promising? How large a class do our young people compose;—how important as embosoming the elements of all the good and evil in human character and destiny to be evolved by the forthcoming generation;—how susceptible now to our influ-

ence;—how soon to pass beyond it and become the actors and arbiters in the events of another age!

Fathers, mothers, teachers, ministers of Christ! in the groups of bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked ones around you, behold the future preceptors, church members, ministers,—yea, it may be, noble pioneers of the Gospel and glorious martyrs of Jesus,—whom you are to lead to the Saviour and train for his service!

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WORDS TO THE YOUNG READER.

THIS volume has perhaps fallen into your hands in some merely casual way. Or it may be that you have taken it up on the kind suggestion of some Christian friend. But there is still a more hopeful supposition. It is that you have been led to the reading of it by the feeling of your own personal concern in the subject of which it treats. Would to God that this were true in every case!

But, whatever may have been the feeling or purpose on your part, wishing as I do that the book may accomplish its end, I have one earnest request to make. It is that you continue the perusal of this volume. Read it through. Read it, even if you find no peculiar attraction in it and feel no special interest in the subject. Read it for the subject's sake, and the benefit which you may derive from it if you read as you ought. Do not be content with merely turning over a few leaves to satisfy curiosity. The pressure of your studies or other engagements, or the greater fascinations of some book which falls in more with your present tastes, may tempt you to lay this aside. But I trust that you will not yield to the temptation. Certainly the Sabbath, if no other day, will afford the needful leisure. And what better time to ponder the subject-matter of these pages than amid the quiet and solemnity of a Sabbath morning or evening? But who is there that cannot—where there is a will

to do it—redeem, out of the hours of any day, time sufficient to read at least one of the brief chapters that follow?

Let me still further suggest that you carefully examine the Scripture quotations appended to these chapters. Read them even more than once. Let the golden words of God's truth come home to your heart.

But there is still another thing, which I would present with more than the urgency of a mere suggestion. The profit of such a book as this to the reader depends upon the disposition with which it is read, more than the manner in which it is written. And rest assured, dear young friend, that unless you open your heart to what I shall say, and God shall say through me, in the pages following, even the entire perusal of them will be of no great or permanent benefit to you. If the desire of this be not awakened in your own mind, not all the books that you could read, not all the sermons that you might hear, though the best in the world, would produce any saving effect. How many of these have you already read and heard in a merely mechanical, if not in a very careless way. What would the best chart or the most elegant compass be worth, if the vessel were not steered by them?—what the most thorough acquaintance with any art or science, if this knowledge were never put to use? So it is that many, very many, young persons suffer their early days to pass away, attending the Sabbath-school, listening to faithful preaching, enjoying the religious instructions of the family, without ever forming any strong purpose, or making any decided effort, or offering any really earnest prayer for salvation;—not knowing or not reflecting that all the time they thus loiter, a tide is drifting them, almost insensibly it may be, but steadily and powerfully, downward toward their ruin.

Let me beseech you, therefore, not to enter upon the perusal of what is here before you, without prayer. Remember,—oh,

remember, that no arguments, no means of persuasion, can of themselves change or save you. The most ample repast may be provided, but all in vain for him who has no will to eat; and the richest treasures will all be lost to him who will not unlock the coffer or draw upon the bank. So the desire, the purpose, must be in your heart, if any means are to be blessed to your spiritual welfare.

You will find prayers in connexion with the several chapters: these I trust you will not only read, but endeavor to adopt as your own. But let me exhort you to begin the book with an outpouring of your heart to God. Join your prayer with the petitions which the writer has endeavored to offer for all his youthful readers, and with those offered by your pious friends;—humbly and earnestly soliciting, through that name which we must ever plead for our acceptance, the grace which will enable you rightly to receive what is here addressed to you.

And I feel all confidence that so doing, you will not read in vain. How happy will it be for you, if what I have written should be the means of "forming in you the hope of glory." Shall not this be the blessed result?

"REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH WHEN THOU SHALT SAY I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM."

GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY PIETY HAS BEEN MADE THE SUBJECT OF A DIRECT MESSAGE FROM GOD, CONVEYED IN THE MOST INTERESTING AND IMPRESSIVE MANNER IN HIS WORD.

THE first verse of the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes,—who has not read it, or heard it, that has read or heard anything of the Bible? Those words, "Remember now thy Creator,"—whose heart has not felt their impression, as first, in the days of our childhood, we heard them from a parent's lips, or the eye fell on them in turning over the pages of the Bible?

It is not the only part of Scripture which is designed for the special encouragement and benefit of the interesting class of persons to whom it is addressed. I shall refer, in what follows, to other passages of like character, and to numerous and interesting examples of Scripture history, which have relation to the subject of early piety.

But this contains a direct address. It may be called, peculiarly and eminently, a *message to the young.* I have chosen it for the subject and motto of the following pages, wishing that all I here undertake to say shall stand on the foundation of Scripture truth and sentiment. If we look at these well known words in their relation merely to their human authorship they are possessed of no mean interest and attraction. In the person of the writer we behold one of the greatest and most illustrious of men. It was the great and wise king of Israel, the "wise man" of the ancient world, whose pen was chosen to convey this expression of the divine interest in the young.

History might be challenged to produce a person more capable from his position and circumstances of giving advice to the old or the young. From early to advanced life he filled one of the most important public stations ever occupied by any man. And no man ever made a more full experiment of human life than this royal writer. Divine munificence may be said to have laid itself out to expend on him the highest measure of temporal good that any mortal was ever permitted to enjoy. "I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother" (Prov. iv. 3). "Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like" (2 Chron. i. 12).

Perhaps all this was done for him, with a view of

showing, in his example, how unsatisfying in themselves, and how dangerous to the best interests of the soul, are all mere worldly enjoyments; and that the record of his case, in its results, might be made by his own pen, for the benefit of all mankind.

Where lived there ever a human being around whom clustered such a combination of all that the world values? The eminence which men would commonly deem it the great achievement of a lifetime to reach in any one particular of worldly advantage or prosperity, this favored man enjoyed in all. Our Saviour himself, when he would produce, from all preceding history, the highest illustration of human wisdom or of human glory, points us to Solomon (see Matt. vi. 29 and xii. 2). Elegance of person and manners, genius, learning, wealth, power, fame,—all these were his and in the largest measure. What more of earthly good would it seem that any heart could crave?

And no man ever enjoyed better opportunities of studying the world of men around him than did he, from the lofty point of observation to which his royal station exalted him, and for which his philosophical mind so well fitted him. He had studied all, he had tried all, of what the world can in itself afford of good; and the book of Ecclesiastes seems to embody the great king's review of human existence.* Indeed it is a fact worthy of particular no-

* If the reader would see a brilliant delineation of Solomon himself, and an elegant paraphrase and exposition of Ecclesiastes, he is referred to the Rev. James Hamilton's "Royal Preacher."

tice, on the part of every youthful reader of the Bible, that two entire books of it, from his pen, seem to have been composed, in great part, with a special view to the benefit of persons in the outset of life. The portion contained in the first nine chapters, of what is comprehended under the name of the Book of Proverbs, may be considered as constituting of itself an entire and independent book. It seems to have been dedicated to some young man—probably one of the king's own sons—and to have been composed with the express object of setting forth the duties and temptations of youthful life, which it exhibits with great power of exhortation and warning. It merits, therefore, the particular study of all young persons.

And here, in this book of Ecclesiastes—the volume of his experience and his study of the world—in the close of his writings and the closing years of his life, this great man turns to the same class again. This sentence in the conclusion of Ecclesiastes contains a sentiment similar to that with which the Book of Proverbs begins (Prov. i. 7), where we are told that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning," or "chief part," "of knowledge." The two brief expressions seem to embody the sum and practical point of all that he wrote in both of those great books of sacred philosophy. But in these concluding lines of his contributions to the sacred writings, the sentiment turns into a strain of lofty and solemn exhortation. The whole passage contained in the twelfth of Ecclesiastes, so full of striking and beautiful imagery, may be considered as a sermon, of

which the words of the first verse are the text. From the exalted position which he held, looking round on the world which he had so fully tried and was now soon to leave, and looking forward through all time, this most eminent of men here seems to stand and preach to the youthful readers of the Bible, in every generation and all over the world. "Son, daughter," he seems to say, "set not your heart on this world. Even were it, in all respects, what it pretends, and promises you to be, how foolish to run the risk which you would do to gain it, if pursued in an unsanctified manner. But it is far from being, in its unhallowed enjoyments, what, to your inexperienced and credulous eyes, it would seem to be. I have seen, I have tried what the world can yield to satisfy a human spirit. I have found it 'vanity;'—yes, all is vanity, the very 'vanity of vanities.' Nor think that the duties which you owe the Author of your being are such as belong more appropriately to maturer years. I have passed through the various stages of life to its last; and I solemnly admonish you that your coming days, if you live to be older, instead of being either happy in the enjoyment of what the world now promises you, or favorable to the care of your spiritual interests, will, in both these particulars, be to you 'evil days,' emphatically evil; and more and more so, the longer you live. Hearken, therefore, to one who leaves this his last solemn testimony for those that are to come after him, to the end of time, and 'remember now your Creator.'"

Thus speaks Solomon, becoming a "preacher" to

the youthful world. How solemn, how impressive that voice, as it sounds over the tracts of time, from nearly three thousand years ago!

But coming as do these words of his, through the pages of Scripture, and under divine inspiration, they convey not merely the sentiments of one of the wisest and greatest of mortals. They stand on the sacred page by divine authority. The illustrious monarch and philosopher speaks indeed as such, but he speaks also as a divine oracle. The closing words of Ecclesiastes contain God's own MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG.

And how interesting as such! A divine illumination shines from the page; a divine voice speaks in these words. With what veneration should they be received! How ought they to be studied and delighted in by all of those to whom they are addressed! How perpetually before the eyes, how deeply graven on the heart of every youth!

We find nothing like this anywhere in the sacred volume, addressed to any other class of persons. God has singled out the young, from all the human family, as the objects of his special regard. But it is not enough to say that this divine communication is addressed to all who belong to a certain class. It is even yet more distinctive. It speaks as if to one person. It adopts the singular number. "*Thy* Creator," "*thy* youth," is the language employed. What does this mean but that the message here announced is to be received, by every young person, as if it were directed singly and personally to him or her? It is just as much so in God's design,

my young friend, as if you were the only individual of all the human family to be thus addressed—as much so as if it came to you directly from Him, through an angel's hand, and with your name inscribed upon it. How interesting in this point of view to every youthful reader of the Bible! And with what profound reverence, what earnest attention, what grateful love, what submission of the heart, what ready obedience, ought such a communication from Heaven to be received by all of those to whom it is thus addressed? Will you not thus receive it, dear reader?

"Solomon in all his glory" (Matt. v. 29).

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Pet. i. 19).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (1 Tim. iii. 16).

"The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21).

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke xi. 31).

"Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God" (Deut. xv. 5).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

"Remember thy Creator." Yes, they are familiar words. To read or hear them recalls some of the earliest and most sacred recollections of childhood. A father's, a mother's voice and love seem to hallow them in my memory.

And how venerable in their antiquity and their authorship! They sound from the tomb of departed greatness. They issue from the deep recesses of centuries long gone by. Age, wisdom, experience, speak in them. Dignity of station, power of intellect, profoundness of learning, amplitude of observation, all conspire to give them force. Nay, rather, do they not seem to come invested with the solemnities of that spirit-world to which, laying down his mortal honors in the dust, he who penned them has long since departed?

But it is not merely the voice of one of the most gifted and honored of men that I hear in these words. It is a voice that proceeds from the Author of my being. It is His epistle, His message. It asserts His claim, it teaches my duty, it admonishes me of what concerns my interests and my safety. If I were alone with God in the universe, or the only inhabitant of earth, how profoundly would my mind be impressed by such a communication from the Almighty! And is it not as much designed for me, and of as high interest to me, as if I were thus alone?

Surely, if He has deemed it so important thus to speak to me, I ought to deem it equally important that I should listen! And if He has made it personal to me, shall I not make it personal to myself?

Thou great Father of my being! dost Thou condescend to me, Thy creature, and shall I not pay Thee the most prompt and most deferential regard? Shall I not hearken to anything that comes from such a source?

Thy providence has now brought into my hands a book whose object is to impress upon persons of my years the obligation of an early devotion to Thee. I have derived too little advantage from the means of instruction which I have hitherto enjoyed. Shall this too fail of its end? Grant me, oh, grant me, for Christ's sake, Thy grace, that I may read to my profit what is now before me, and let not the lines and pages which my eyes are now to trace appear to my condemnation in the last day, or live in my memory, in another world, only to add to the regrets of a ruined immortality.

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUNG, BY REASON OF NATURAL DEPRAVITY, ARE PRONE TO FORGET THEIR CREATOR, AND TO FORGET HIM MORE AND MORE. THIS FACT ITSELF INDICATES THE NECESSITY OF EARLY PIETY, AND GIVES OCCASION FOR THE DIVINE MESSAGE ON THE SUBJECT.

That there is a tendency, on the part even of the youngest, to forgetfulness and neglect of God, is implied in the very injunction to remember Him. And who of us, alas! does not know this fact, full well, from all his observation and experience?

We may grant that no one, who has been taught the existence of a Creator, can absolutely lose the memory of such a being, This great truth, once impressed upon any mind, can never, perhaps, be entirely effaced. But we may, nevertheless, put Him in a great measure out of our thoughts, and live as if we knew or remembered nothing of Him. The person who has received a benefit will hardly lose altogether the recollection of his benefactor's name and existence, but he may cease to bear in mind what he owes him. The child cannot forget what he once knew of his parent, but he may neglect to cherish an affectionate and dutiful remem-

brance of that parent. This is the forgetfulness of the heart.

The same thing holds of us in regard to the great Creator and Father of us all. The larger part of His creatures in this wicked world do actually live in practical forgetfulness of Him. The greater part of the time He is wholly absent from their thoughts. When they do think of Him, it is only when circumstances force reflection upon them. They banish the idea as quickly as they can, and actually live, the most of their lives on earth, with no more regard to Him than if He had not even an existence, or they owed Him no duty whatever. Truly, "God is not in all their thoughts."

It is not necessary to suppose that the youthful, as a class, are more prone than others to such dereliction. The contrary is the fact. They are generally more alive to religious impressions, and more thoughtful of their duty to God, than older persons. But it is true, at the same time, that they, in common with others, are liable to the danger and sin of putting away, from their minds and hearts, the proper remembrance of Him who made them.

He is a purely spiritual being. He is absent from our senses. He can be apprehended only by the mind; and under the ordinary circumstances of life, it seems even to require an effort of thought to bring Him present to us. It is, therefore, generally within our power, in thought and feeling, to exclude Him from us. And this is just what circumstances around us would incline us to do, from the

very outset of life. We draw our first breath, as our last, in a world that is unmindful of its God. The atmosphere of our present existence is one of stupid and horrid oblivion of the grand, glorious, transcendent, central idea of Jehovah's existence. The most of those by whom we are surrounded, through life, are almost wholly thoughtless of their Creator. This is sometimes, unhappily, too true even of parents, teachers, and those friends, of superior age, from whom the young person might look for something better, and under whose influence the first years of life are spent.

But a stronger cause of the evil lies within us. The dearest boy, the loveliest girl, is the heir of a fallen nature, which is averse to God and holiness. Even the infant's bosom is the casket of a broken and marred jewel. If, with our young people, there is more of what we call the inclination towards religion, it is but too true that there is a stronger inclination in the opposite direction, and that the inclination supposed, of the right kind, is only a less strong disinclination to that which is good. Some of the better thoughts and feelings, under the influence of a yet tender conscience, may indeed tend towards God and duty, but the general current of feeling runs, and runs but too powerfully, the other way.

Nor is it merely as a thing possible, or something to be apprehended, that the youthful are warned of forgetting their God. Even with them it is mournfully a matter of fact. It is their sin, their crime, that they have already, even so early in life, to a

great extent, forgotten their Maker. It is what every one of them, that has not had experience of the new birth, is actually doing every day.

And while I am ready to admit that the mind in early years is more sensible to the impressions of religion, and less under the power of opposing influences than it generally is at any after period, yet there are circumstances attending our youthful life, which operate somewhat peculiarly to lead the heart into forgetfulness of God. The young are more alive than older persons to the power of outward and sensible objects. Their appetites and passions are strong. They are generally more heedless and rash than persons of more mature age. They are social in their feelings and very sensitive to the opinions even of their young companions, as is often seen, in a remarkable degree, at college and school. The case of Rehoboam, as given in 2 Chron. x. 8–14, is but an illustration of what holds true of the young of both sexes everywhere, as to their influence over each other. Who does not know the susceptibility of the youthful mind, even to the influence of silent example?

Then, with young persons, the world possesses a power of attraction beyond what it has with others. It appears to them in unreal and illusive visions, which have passed away, in a measure, from the minds of those who have lived long enough to have experience of its disappointments. Who that has reached adult age, does not remember the beautiful pictures of coming life that his youthful fancy used to paint? They were doomed to melt away, like

the golden isles and castles of a sun-set sky; but it is by the fascination of such day-dreams that the world throws a spell of power over a youthful and sanguine mind, to draw it away from God. In this point of view, how true indeed that "childhood and youth are vanity?"

The young reader will perhaps ask, If, as you say, I am not more disposed to forget my Creator than other people are, why has a particular warning of such omission been addressed to me and not to them also?

I answer—and both question and answer are of deep importance to the inquirer—it is for the very reason that, while you are prone to be unmindful of the Father of your being, and have already begun to manifest this but too plainly, you have not yet gone so far astray from Him as you will have gone, if you live longer as you are. The tendency to forget Him, the danger of falling into habits of utter irreligion, increases with the growth of years. I shall say more on this point hereafter; but let me ask, Have you not yourself seen how callous and reckless men become as they pursue, through youth and adult age, the ways of impenitency? Behold in them what you are likely to become!

But now, in the very first steps of your devious path, your Almighty Father comes near to you. He lays his hand upon you, He speaks with a paternal voice. He calls to you, to remind you of your all-important duties and interests, before you have too far lost sight of them. Would you not be admonished of being out of the right path, before you have wandered beyond return?

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1).

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts" (Ps. x. 4).

"The nations that forget God" (Ps. ix. 17).

"Ye that forget God" (Ps. l. 22).

"And forgettest the Lord thy Maker" (Isa. li. 13).

"Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee" (Deut. xxxii. 18).

"Thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength" (Isa. xvii. 10).

"They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13).

"Take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Heb. iii. 12).

THE YOUNG READER'S CANDID ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE IMPORTANT TRUTH STATED IN THIS CHAPTER.

This is truly a serious view of my case, and one that I have hardly apprehended before. That I am already in a divergent path, an alien from God, a wanderer and prone to wander still more—the heart dislikes to acknowledge this to be true; but I have the evidence of it too palpable within myself. My Creator has been exiled from a place in my heart. Excepting a few intervals when conscience and right feeling seemed to assert their power, I have been willing, nay, more than willing, to exclude all thought of Him. Even where I have attended upon religious duties, in outward form, I have done it under the leadings of conscience and religious education, and not because my heart was in these things. Indeed they have been rather a task than

otherwise. I have not taken delight in prayer, in praise, in the service of God.

And this distaste, and my consequent neglects, are growing upon me. It is too true that I am disposed to put my Maker away from my thoughts, and to do this continually, more and more. How timely and appropriate therefore the call to remember him "in the days of my youth."

Does He come to meet me as I wander from Him? Do I hear His own voice addressing me and saying in tender accents, Son, daughter, forget not Him that made thee? And shall not all the deference of which my soul is capable, be paid to such majesty and love? The call so often made and in so many ways before, seems to be renewed in the perusal of this volume of monitions on youthful piety. Shall that call be now repeated in vain? Shall I harden my heart and thus afford a new illustration of the tendencies already so apparent in me to forget the Great and Blessed One whose creature I am, and to whom, above all persons and objects, the earliest thoughts and affections of my heart should tend?

CHAPTER III.

THE PRECEPT OF ECCL. XII. 1, COMPREHENDS IN ITS IMPORT THE FULL DEVOTION OF THE HEART TO GOD; AND EVERY REASON THAT HOLDS AT ALL IN FAVOR OF RELIGION WOULD GO TO ENFORCE THE OBLIGATION OF EARLY PIETY.

I HAVE thus far had reference, in all that I have said, to the divine message contained in Eccl. xii. 1, and I shall have occasion to refer to it throughout the succeeding pages. I wish that my young readers and myself should have this inspired precept before our eyes, all the way, as we proceed.

It will hardly be necessary, especially after what has been said in the last chapter, that I should spend many words in showing what it enjoins. Even the most juvenile reader of the Bible probably understood, upon his first reading of the passage, that what is there inculcated is not a mere intellectual remembrance of the Being who made us; such a remembrance as consists in spending an occasional thought upon Him; or in indulging a sentimental and poetical admiration of Him, as He appears in creation; or in showing Him only outward reverence in acts of worship. All of these, as the youngest of my readers knows, may be practised

by the most irreligious and even profane persons.

It is *the remembrance* of *the heart* which God requires of us, in and from our early years; that kind of remembrance, affectionate, dutiful, habitual, which we cherish of those whom we love and revere, and whom we desire to please and honor.

Nor do I need to take much pains to show the young reader of these pages, that such a remembrance of our Creator cannot take place except in a regenerate heart. It exists perfectly and constantly, in the bosoms of angels and all unfallen creatures. It is their spontaneous habit. With them the love of God is inborn. By nature they are religious beings, and that in the utmost degree. Conversion and regeneration are not known in the heavenly world, because its inhabitants have no need of any change of their affections. To think of God with love and delight is as natural to them as to us it is to breathe. But in our case, alas! it is but too different. True religion, which consists in the devotion of the heart to God, is not natural to depraved creatures, such as we are. It has been lost in the fall of our race. The youngest and most seemingly innocent person has occasion to know this but too well, not merely from the teachings of his Bible and catechism, but from the study of his own heart. True piety or godliness, therefore, has to be restored to every human soul. How this is brought about, my young friends scarcely need to be told. Every child, in a country like ours, has been taught the simple but glorious "way of salva-

tion" for sinners. Through the offering which our blessed Saviour has made of Himself for us, we obtain not only the pardon of our sins, but the gift of the Holy Spirit, to renew our fallen nature and form us to the love, communion, and service of God.

The duty, therefore, of remembering our Creator involves the duties of repentance for sin, and of trust in the merits of a Saviour. It implies the necessity of regeneration, or a change wrought in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, from sin to holiness, from aversion and neglect to the filial love and fear of God. Need I tell you that, without this change, we can never entertain proper thoughts of Him who made us; and when once it has been experienced, then we begin to think of Him and feel towards him as we ought. Then our pleasure falls in with our duty. Then His name, as the most loved and honored, dwells and rules in our hearts. Then it becomes our delight to think of Him, as our "Creator," our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Sovereign, our Almighty, All-wise, All-good Father and Friend.

Piety—youthful piety—is the high duty enjoined on all, in the precept which bids us "remember our Creator in the days of our youth." And can the practice of piety begin too soon? Is it not appropriate that it should begin with our existence? Are not the obligations of religion binding alike upon the old and the young? Can any one wish to leave out, from the number of the pious, the most numerous class of mankind, and at the most important period of their existence? Are our dear young

people themselves willing to be thus left out, and stand in the ranks of the ungodly, till they cease to be young? Is not religion in all respects as important and valuable to them as it is to any class of people whatever? Is it not indeed that which, first of all and most of all, they do need, even while they are in early childhood, and yet, as it were, upon the threshold of life?

So far from having less weight, the considerations, whether of duty or of benefit, which would lead any person to a life of piety, have augmented force when they are applied to the case of one who is under adult age. This we shall have occasion to see, in the subsequent part of this book; while we shall also see that there are some independent and peculiar motives to youthful piety.

But let me here ask, do the young stand in less need of salvation, in less need of renewing and saving grace than other portions of our sinful race? And why should not every lad and every maiden, in the family and school circle, be a follower of Christ and a child of God? May not the heart even of the little child be so renewed by the Holy Spirit that, as the sun-flower to the sun, it shall always incline towards God, in affectionate and obedient remembrance? This was evidently true of John the Baptist, and probably of the prophet Samuel, as it has also been of some most eminently holy persons of later days. Some examples of the kind will be mentioned in one of the following chapters of this book.

But why should not even the child, that numbers

only his quarter or half score of years, if he be but able to comprehend the idea of his fallen and sinful state, and of a Saviour dying in his behalf, be supposed capable of intelligent conversion? Why may he not begin to exercise love, reverence, gratitude, trust, obedience, towards his Saviour and his God, just as soon as he entertains them towards his earthly parents? The learned and pious commentator and preacher, Dr. A. Clarke—referring to a period of his childhood, in which, at six years of age, and many years previous to his conversion, his mind had been greatly under the power of religious truth—said, "Had I had any person to point out the 'Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,' I believe that I should then have been found as capable of repentance and faith, my youth and circumstances considered, as I ever was afterwards."

There are many, very many of those who have been converted after they passed the years of childhood, who, from their own consciences, could make a similar declaration.

And as to that large mass of young people who stand between early childhood and adult years, how many of them have their minds stored with the wealth of scripture knowledge, gained in the family and the sabbath school, and are just as well informed on the great points of saving truth as they can ever be in an unrenewed state—far better informed, I might say, than the great mass of persons around them that are scores of years beyond their age! What more is needed, but that there should be a sanctified use of this acquired knowledge—that

the seed should be caused to fructify—that they should begin to act upon what they have learned—that they should follow the light which has been so fully shed upon their path?

And a solemn question it is for parents, teachers, and young people themselves to ponder, if our children and youth are not the children of God, what are they?

I know indeed that parents and adult friends are apt to think of these young persons as going through a sort of preparation, under religious instruction and in the use of present means, to become Christians at more mature age. Nor can it be denied that it is better, far better, that they should be under such means and influences than be without them. Facts show that there is much more hope of conversion in the case of a person who enjoys such advantages in early years, along with the prayers of pious friends, than of one who does not. And most of those who are thus favored with youthful privileges, where they are brought to Christ at all, are actually converted before they pass to the years of manhood and womanhood. But how many of them, alas! disappoint our hopes when the season comes for the expected fruit! And even should the development of Christian character be the happier result with these young members of our families, schools, and communities, when they arrive at maturity, or at the very last years of juvenile life, will this, I ask, be the fulfilling of the precept to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth?"

And I repeat the fearful interrogatory, where do

these loved young ones stand in the meantime? Is there middle ground, between religion and irreligion, for any descendant of Adam, whether old or young, to occupy? If our sons and daughters are not, by a fully formed piety, on the side of God, during that most important period of human life, from three or five to fifteen or seventeen years of age, what is their true character and proper designation? Alas! how many hopes of good to the church and the world may be blasted in the bud, by the neglect of early cultivation! How much of the fruit is probably lost, by our being satisfied merely with the blossom! And in how many cases may it be, where it ought not to be, that parents and surviving friends are called to weep at youthful graves, in dark uncertainty and fear, or—what is no better—suffer the delusion of a groundless hope of salvation, for loved young ones that are gone!

And here, at the outset, let me exhort every young friend who takes up this book, to pause and make for himself the inquiry which I have suggested. Have you obtained "the one thing needful?" Have you chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from you? Have you been enriched by possessing the "goodly pearl of great price?" What would become of you if you should die as you now are?

"Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace" (Job xxii. 21).

"Delight thyself also in the Lord" (Ps. xxxvii. 4.)

"We will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. xx. 7).

"Therefore will I remember thee" (Ps. xlii. 6).

"I have set the Lord always before me" (Ps. xvi. 8).

"I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Ps. lxiii. 6).

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord" (Ps. civ. 34).

"The desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee" (Is. xxvi. 8).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Ps. cxxxix. 23).

THE YOUNG READER'S PERSONAL EXAMINATION OF THE QUESTION PROPOSED IN THE CONCLUSION OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

A child of God or not? A friend or an enemy? Forgiven or unforgiven? A question truly of deep interest to me! Strange to say, my pious friends have scarce ever urged it directly upon me, yet what question half so important? How fearful the thoughts suggested by the mere possibility of my not being one of God's people! Where do I stand, whither am I going, if I am not on that side? My Bible teaches me that there are but two classes, that there is no neutral ground, that there is no middle path to travel.

I have been taught, from my earliest years, that I have a fallen and corrupt nature, incapable in itself of good, and prone continually to evil; and my own consciousness declares this to be true. Has this depraved nature ever been renewed? What evidence have I of such a change? Do I love God? Does it afford me pleasure to think of Him, to hold converse with Him in prayer? to praise, honor, serve

Him? This is the way that all the holy angels, and all God's true people here on earth, feel and act. And if I have never experienced renewing grace, what can I be but a "child of wrath" and an heir of perdition?

And how important, above all things, for me to see the true state of the case!

Father of all mercies! Father of my spirit! decide this case for me, not in thy mind only, but in my own. Let me see it as Thou seest it. Let me truly, fully know what I am. If I am yet in an impenitent, unreconciled state, make me properly conscious of the fact. Let my thoughts now be turned to a right consideration of my condition. And to this end, I pray, in the name of Him through whom all grace is given, that Thou wouldst impart to me the teachings of that Spirit, whose office it is savingly to enlighten the soul.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY PIETY IS OBVIOUSLY AND IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE OBLIGATORY, FROM THE VERY RIGHT WHICH GOD HAS IN US, AS OUR CREATOR AND REDEEMER, FROM THE BEGINNING OF OUR EXISTENCE.

How came I to have my being? Did I produce myself? Who endowed me with the high faculties of my nature? What power but that of the Almighty could have given me any of them?

When once these questions have been answered, need it be asked where the right of property in us and of control over us resides? That right of our Creator precedes, includes, and is superior to every right, actual or imaginable, that any human being can have in us, or we in ourselves. Does my young reader deny this or even doubt it? Every understanding assents to the truth. It is only the heart that is reluctant to acknowledge it. And if we have been so created and endowed by a being of infinite intelligence, it was surely not without some end in view. What was that end—what could it be, "but to glorify and enjoy Him," both in time and in eternity? You and I, my young friend,

have our existence for precisely the same end for which angels have theirs. Our Creator holds in us an equal right with that which he holds in them; for he is no more the author of their being than of ours. And this right covers our whole existence. Not a moment of it can be subtracted, the earliest or the latest. Those that are yet in early life are just as much bound to His love and service as any that are older. How, in fact, if he designs our life in this world to be spent in his service at all, could He make an exception of the best part of it? Do you wish to make it in your own case?

And is this an obligation which we should be, for a moment, unwilling or reluctant to acknowledge, in heart as well as in understanding? That great Author of all, is he not worthy of what he claims of you? Is not infinite excellence infinitely deserving in itself, of your love and veneration? And do not the boundless love and mercy of God to the human family in general, and to you as an individual, claim your whole heart? Would anything less than the whole heart and the whole life be a fit return? What blessing, oh young friend, of all the numberless blessings that crowd the hours and moments of your life, has not come from Him, and is not stamped with the seal of His love? And will you, can you, live upon your Creator's bounties, and not remember the hand that bestows them,—revel in the joyousness of youth's bright hours, and not think of Him who has opened to you all the fountains of your enjoyment? "If," says Lord Chatham, writing to his son, "gratitude be due to earthly

parents and benefactors, how much more of it do we owe to that great Being who gives us even these parents and friends!"

But if, for temporal benefits, our debt exceeds all that words can express or thought conceive, how much is due for spiritual blessings! Here is a motive which angels do not feel—a tie to bind us which has never been thrown around them. Not only has the Father of all given you natural life; but, in the gospel which brings the offers of salvation "without money and without price" to every sinner, He may be said to have given you back, in some sense, that life of holiness and happiness which, by a corrupt nature and sinful practice, you have lost. Not only has He created you, but He holds you up, every hour, from death and hell, and has provided for your restoration to Himself and your recovery of all the felicities, and more than all, that our first forefather and we have parted with. This has been done by the substitution of One who is so infinitely great and worthy, that His death answers to God's holy and inviolable law for the punishment of any and every offender, who is willing, in humble penitence and faith, to receive the benefit.

And can a young and susceptible heart be insensible to these compassions of a Heavenly Father—this suffering, dying love of a divine Redeemer? How truly, how entirely, above any other obligation that can bind us, do we belong to God, in view of what He has done for us, not only as our Creator and Benefactor, but as our atoning Saviour! The obligation seems like one infinite added to another.

And when once a claim so high and paramount is admitted, what further arguments do I need to use? Is it not enough to know, of anything that is proposed to us, that it is our duty,—most of all where it has reference to the God who made us? Do not your own conscience and heart, with all their voices, approve the conduct of Joseph, of Moses, the young Jews of the captivity at Babylon, and of all the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints of God in different ages who, in like manner, have preferred to suffer poverty and shame, imprisonment, exile, death itself, rather than fail of their duty to God? Does He claim anything less of you than of them? Do you owe Him any less?

And if our Creator has such a right in us and in all His creatures, that right can never, even for a moment, be set aside. It is perfect, eternal, unalterable. To speak therefore of putting off religion, even for a time, is just as absurd as to speak of putting off the duty of loving our parents, our benefactors, our country, or of postponing the duties of truth, honesty, and justice. These are things the obligation of which, from its very nature, lies upon us always, and as much at one time as another. Just so in the matter which we are now considering—the obligation to love and honor our Creator is one that can never be shaken off—never for a moment be neglected without guilt. If you can shift off your duty to God, if you are at liberty to defer it, every creature of God in heaven and on earth may use the same license. If you may put off religion, then every Christian on earth, every angel

in glory, may leave it off and cease from serving God. What would you think of their so doing? Does not the thought of it strike you with a kind of horror? And do you suppose that you ought to regard your own present course, if it is one of irreligion, with any less of such horror?

But how often, where the conscience fully acknowledges duty in the case, are young persons, among their thoughtless companions at school and elsewhere, kept, by a kind of shame and timidity, at a distance from God? Is this your temptation, beloved youth? Does the fear of derision or alienation, on the part of those around you, hold you back from owning your obligations to the God that made you and the Saviour that died for you? Remember the words of that Saviour Himself: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Would you blush to own your earthly parents and benefactors, your country, your right opinions on any other subject, or your espousal of any other good and honorable cause? Will you then be ashamed of that which last and least you ought ever to be ashamed of, namely, of your duty to your Maker? What! a poor worm of the dust ashamed of the infinite Jehovah? Ashamed of infinite purity and love? Rather, ten thousand times, let us count it our disgrace and infamy that we should, for one moment, think of neglecting and dishonoring Him who is the centre, the sum, the source of all that is excellent, and from whose con-

descension and love we derive all of present and past fruition, and all our hopes of good for coming time and eternity.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Prov. xvi. 4).

"He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand" (Ps. xcv. 7).

"All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine" (Ez. xviii. 4).

"Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things!" (Rom. xi. 36).

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Matt. xxii. 37).

"Whose I am" (Acts. xxvii. 23).

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

"Young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxlviii. 12, 13).

"All people will walk, every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever" (Mic. iv. 5).

PRAYER.

O Thou, who hast made me, and made me what I am, I acknowledge Thy everlasting right in me.

Thou hast endowed me with all my powers of body and mind; Thou hast given me all that I possess or enjoy in this life; Thou art, in Thyself, infinitely worthy of all the love, the reverence, the service that I can ever render Thee; and, as I am clearly taught in Thy word, Thou hast formed me for thine own glory. Shall I be unmindful of the

great source of my being? Shall I live from day to day as if He did not even exist?

Thy mercy binds still other cords around me. Thy ceaseless and ineffable goodness to me, through my youthful years thus far, does it not demand of me all that I can ever render of thankfulness and love? Shall I not remember Him who has ever remembered me in such fatherly kindness? Shall I give a place in my inmost heart to my parents and other benefactors, and banish altogether from my affections and thoughts my Heavenly Father, my benefactor of benefactors?

And shall I suffer fear or shame to separate me from my duty and my best interests? How false a shame—how mean and wicked a cowardice! No, rather let me, when I am tempted to deviate from my duty to Him, feel as did the pious youth of old, when he was tempted: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Let me, after the example of another young servant of God, "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than "any treasures," and "choose rather to suffer af- "fliction with the people of God than to enjoy the "pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25, 26).

And can my heart resist the power of redeeming mercy and dying love? The Lord of glory in human form, weeping, bleeding, expiring for me!

> Oh! the sweet wonders of that cross,
> Where God the Saviour loved and died!

Truly I am "not my own;" I am "bought with a

price," I am doubly and more than doubly the Lord's, as being His by creation and preservation, and His by the ransoming love of the Saviour Son, which holds me up from hell and opens to me the gates of everlasting glory. May I be thine, too, oh my great and adorable Creator, by the renewing power of the Spirit, which shall awaken in me Thy love, change me to Thine image, and fit me for that high destiny for which Thou hast formed me. And then I shall remember Thee, and delight to remember Thee, in and from the days of youth, as my Father, Saviour, Sanctifier.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY PIETY IS PRESCRIBED BY GOD'S COUNSEL AND COMMAND.

Scarcely any young person, especially of those that have been well instructed in the truths of the Bible, will for a moment dispute the general obligations of religion. "I must some time or other be a Christian," is the voice that speaks in almost every youthful bosom. In some it speaks frequently and solemnly. You agree then that your heart and life must, some day, be brought under the power of religion.

The question then comes—and it is one of immense interest, as it relates to so great a concern—what is the proper time for a life of piety to begin? This question God Himself has decided, in the injunction to "remember Him in" our early days. And need I argue with any intelligent young person, to show that where He gives His judgment on any subject, there can be no mistake? Does He ever, is it possible that He ever should, exact of His creatures anything that is not good for them, and good in the highest degree? And when He indicates to you or me the time for doing any duty, or discharging any service to Him, is not that the

proper, the only proper time for it? What does He say then on the question now before us? "Remember thy Creator,"—when? how early or late in life? "Now, in the days of thy youth." And the very passage of Scripture which contains this precept—forewarning you as it does in language so pathetic and beautiful, of "the evil days" to come—clearly shows that your Maker makes this requirement on the ground, not merely of your duty to Him, but of His regard for your own highest interests and happiness. And where we have his opinion on any subject, what other reason or motive do we want? How entirely does this settle every question! How utterly unfounded, and false, and pernicious are all our opinions, or those of our fellow-creatures, where they go counter to His! And can you dare to set up your mind against His? And if, when we speak of religion, we mean the love and service of God on earth, and a course of preparation for His everlasting service and communion in heaven, then who can better choose, who but He shall choose for us, the time to learn and practise it? Do the world and Satan insinuate the persuasion—does your own heart too readily agree to it—that the duties of religion ought to be, or may better or as well be laid aside, under the expectation of a more suitable time yet to come? He who made you, and to whom all the duties of religion are due, declares the very opposite of this, and His decision of the case must weigh down all opposing reasons, and opinions, and pretexts, as a mountain in the scale against a feather.

Do you not value the advice of an earthly parent or friend, resting on it sometimes almost as implicitly as if you had no mind, no will of your own—submitting to it without a word of dissent, and even rejoicing, it may be, that you have such a counsellor to decide for you? How much rather shall you not confide in and submit to the opinion of the all-good and all-wise Father of your spirit, where He gives advice? Who but He is competent to decide in so momentous a case?

But the message of God which enjoins early piety is not merely advisory. It speaks in the language of command as well as of counsel. It is authoritative and peremptory, and comes to every youthful eye and ear, invested with the sanctions of divine majesty and almighty power. Who shall dare refuse obedience where such a voice is heard to speak? And mark the language. It is not merely "Remember,—remember in the days of thy youth." As if even this were not enough, an emphatic "now" is added; "remember now," not in the future, but the present of your juvenile life, and through all its days; the earliest and the latest, no exception is made, no postponement permitted. The demand is one of immediate and perpetual obedience. Can you make up your mind to live on through all your youthful days in disregard of it? What angel would not tremble at the thought of disobeying Him in the smallest particular, or of incurring His displeasure even for a moment? And will you, can you, oh youthful reader! endowed as you are with a mind to reflect and a heart to feel,—will you, can you, for any ob-

ject that the world, or the tempter, or your own depravity can suggest, venture upon a course of deliberate, and continued, and bold resistance and rebellion against Him who holds your very breath in His hands, and who has laid such a mandate upon you? How know you but that He may cut short your life itself, in the midst of that career of youthful and wilful forgetfulness of Him? Better, ten thousand times better, to sacrifice all earthly good, to suffer sickness, sorrow, shame and persecution, die in penury and rags, perish on the scaffold or at the stake, than to live day by day, even in this world, under the displeasure of such a being. Better, ten thousand times better all this, than even to encounter a moment's risk of falling under His everlasting frown and curse. Will you be guilty of so mad and desperate a temerity?

"God only wise" (Rom. xvi. 27, and 1 Tim. i. 17).

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James i. 5).

"And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (Job. xxviii. 28).

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel" (Ps. lxxiii. 24).

"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. xxxii. 8).

"Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" (Jer. x. 7).

"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29).

"I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell" (Luke xii. 5).

"Much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. xii. 25).

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. x. 31).

"Shall we not be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. xii. 9).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

And has the Most High addressed me in words of counsel and command? Do I hear the voice of unerring wisdom uttering its oracles, and the voice of infinite majesty and power proclaiming its authority? And shall I spurn the one, or dare to defy the other?

Shall I reject the teachings of infallible truth? Shall I not rather count it my privilege, my honor, my happiness, to have the counsels of a monitor who knows all things in regard to me, in the future as in the present, and who is acquainted as I cannot be, with the term of my years on earth, and the dangers and value of my soul! Who but my Heavenly Father shall decide for me the question as to the time at which I must begin to love and serve Him? And shall I be guilty of the folly and wickedness of setting at naught the authority of Him who has given me my very existence, and one word of whose power could consign me in a moment to death and perdition? What is anything, everything, that I possess or enjoy, if possessed or enjoyed without his benediction? "His favor is life," "His loving-kindness is better than life." And oh, the dreadful possibility of having the weight of almighty power to fall upon me in wrath and vengeance—even the passing thought of it casts dark

shadows over my mind! How then could I bear the tremendous reality?

But let me from filial reverence and affection rather than from slavish fear, obey Him who is almighty in the execution of His justice, and almighty too in the fulfilment of His love and mercy. Let me with young Samuel say: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." And then shall I know, in the felicity of my own experience, what the power and benignity of such a Being can do for those who love and honor Him.

Father of boundless wisdom, and mercy, and power! give me, for Christ's sake, a heart to receive the gracious counsel and obey the solemn injunction of Thy word, to "remember Thee in the days of my youth."

CHAPTER VI.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF EARLY PIETY CANNOT BE DEFERRED OR IN ANY WISE NEGLECTED, WITHOUT CONTINUAL SIN.

This is a very serious view of the matter, and it is one that has probably been very little before your mind. But it is the true one, and you ought to ponder it. You value yourself, it may be, upon your virtuous life, and scarcely feel the consciousness of being a sinner at all. Nor would I undervalue the morality of a youthful life free from the stains of vice. On the contrary, the memory of it will be worth more to you in future years, than all the fancied pleasures of those who seek enjoyment in immoral indulgences.

But sin, as you can yourself most readily see, does not consist wholly in outward acts. Nor would you pretend to say that it consists merely in wrong done to our fellow-men. If, as we have already seen, it is your duty to live always in the love and service of your Creator, then every moment you exist, every breath you breathe, in an irreligious state, you are committing sin.

And what, let me ask, is the reason that, even for a time, you put aside the claims of religion? Why

is it that you do not choose and embrace it at once? Do you not, by this very conduct, declare to your Maker's face that you love the world and your ungodly ways more than you love Him, and that, if you were only allowed to do so, you would always banish Him from your heart?

He calls to you and every young person to remember Him "now." But in every act and every moment of your life you say to Him: I will not yet pay thee this regard; I will first follow the world and my own passions a while. And do you consider it a small offence to treat Him thus? What would you think of a child who should spend whole days without seeking the society of his parents or speaking a word to them? What of a person who, after having received the greatest imaginable favors from a benefactor, should never once thank him or show any remembrance of him? Sins of neglect are sometimes the worst sins of which we are ever guilty. Your whole life is one continual neglect of God, and he looks upon you, in this light, as living in constant transgression. What insult and contempt do you put upon the great and illustrious Being who made you, by giving up the best, the very best, of your time, your powers, your affections, to worldliness and sin, with the expectation of giving Him some of your last and most worthless days or hours—pouring out the richness and sweetness of the cup and offering Him its veriest drainings!

And how can you be sinless, how can your youthful life be anything but one continual course of diso-

bedience and transgression, so long as you neglect the divine injunction which expressly requires of you to "remember Him in the days of your youth?" Can you even postpone without guilt where God so solemnly commands you not to postpone?

You can have no possible right of deciding in this matter, as to the question of duty. There is but one course for you to pursue. God himself has pointed it out; and every moment you live in neglect of Him, you are incurring fresh guilt and exposing yourself anew to the peril of everlasting death. It is nothing, in fact, but the aversion of a corrupt nature to God and holiness that leads you for a moment to delay in this matter, since we never put off, if we can help it, anything that we take pleasure in. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," says the Bible; and this is true, too true of you, young though you be.

Do you rest upon your morality? Does it take away the sting of conscience? Nicodemus was probably a man of most irreproachable outward life; and there was a certain young man that had an interview with our Saviour, whose morality was so blameless that he thought he could say of his duties to his fellow-men, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." That young man, so amiable and ingenuous that it is said "Jesus loved him," like too many other such young persons, knew not his own heart till one who knew it better probed it; and he turned away from Christ, because, like you, he was not willing to give up all and at once; and he probably lost his soul, after being nearer to the Saviour

and salvation than you, probably, have ever been; for he came expressly to have a conversation about personal religion; and you, it may be, have never gone so far as this with any minister or Christian friend.

You perhaps imagine, as many do, that you have made no choice, taken no stand in the matter. Nothing can be more untrue. There is, as I have intimated, but one choice that you have any right to make. You have made just the opposite. You prefer and choose your present course of neglect and disobedience towards Him; you love it, you pursue it, and that, too, with full knowledge of your duty and in defiance of His authority. Nor is this all. The evil of living, a creature of God, in this, God's world, without remembering him, does not terminate with yourself. You not only rob Him of what you owe Him, but encourage others to do the same, and thus help to rob Him also of what is due from them. No one can live here on earth or anywhere in God's creation—perhaps no one can live a single day, without doing in some way, some good or evil! and none of us can live here long without doing a great deal of good or a great deal of mischief. Every human being, even the youngest, the poorest, the most ignorant, has some influence over others; and there is no telling how vast a power of benefit or injury may emanate from one person, how much of it any and every one does actually exert, in a long course of years.

That influence is all on the one side or the other. "He that is not with me is against me," "he that

gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." So long as you live as you now do, your influence is cast into the scale of irreligion. True, it may not be so strongly thrown on that side as if you were living in crime and immorality, but it is all one way, and that is against God. If you doubt this, let me ask you what would the world be,—where would be any true piety, any "remembrance" of the Creator, if every person were like you? Do you not by your daily, hourly example, tell all the world around you, to neglect and forget Him? Do you not preach this, by your life, to every young companion in the circle of your acquaintance?

There is yet one thing to be added to all that I have said in the present chapter. Sin, as the youngest reader will be able to see, is not measured merely by the character of our acts and our courses of conduct, in themselves considered, but also and to a very great extent, by the knowledge we have of our duty. A person who has not committed crimes in themselves by any means so heinous as those of another person, may yet be the greater sinner of the two, on account of his having been better instructed than the other, and brought up under circumstances which rendered it far more disgraceful and wicked for him to offend. In this point of view, you may be much older in sin than many around you who have lived through fifty or sixty years.

Looking therefore at the subject in these lights, there is a most important and solemn sense in which you have yet to "remember" Him who gave you being. If you would ever gain his favor and enjoy

His love, you must know and feel your sins against Him and confess them before Him. You must ask, through Christ, His fatherly forgiveness, and seek the grace which will enable you, for the future, to live in filial mindfulness of Him.

Your duty in this particular cannot be too strongly urged or too deeply felt. You can never become a child of God without some true convictions of sin. Conversion begins with repentance. In the case of fallen creatures like ourselves, it is the beginning of all religion. True penitence is the gift of God. It leads to Christ and salvation.

Think therefore of your sins, your youthful sins. Is there need that I should have made the effort to convince you of them? You have only to listen to the voice of your own conscience. The very fact that you intend to think about your religious duties and interests at some yet future period, is evidence that you are now, and have all along been, neglecting them. In acknowledging your obligations for the future, you pronounce your own condemnation for the past and the present. I have known very young persons who were as amiable and lovely as you or any young person can claim to be, and as insensible as yourself to the consciousness of sin, who, when death approached, felt, as one of them expressed it, that they "could not, could not die." And why? Because in the expectation of appearing before God, and in the light of an approaching eternity, they then saw as they had not before, their whole nature to be depraved, and their whole lives to be wicked.

So, youthful reader, would you look upon your-

self, were you now called to die and appear before your Maker. . "Remember" Him therefore as the God and Father from whom you have departed; ask of Him the gift of the Spirit, to inspire within you true repentance; seek His forgiveness and favor through a Redeemer; and then, when your sins are pardoned and your heart renewed by the Holy Ghost, you will be able to look up to Him, and remember Him as your reconciled God and Father.

"To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James iv. 17).

"God, in whose hands thy breath is and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Dan. v. 23).

"Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. li. 5).

"They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. lviii. 3).

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. li. 4).

"Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job xiii. 26).

"Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (Ps. xxv. 7).

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Ps. li. 17).

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. lvii. 15).

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. li. 10).

PRAYER AND CONFESSION.

O God, my Heavenly Father! I am a sinner against Thee. Give me to feel it as I ought! Not

only is this true of mankind in general, but of myself in particular. Though young, I am an offender, and doubtless a much greater one than I have as yet seen myself to be. How often, in the few years of my existence, have I done things which I knew to be wrong! How often have I spoken idle and foolish words, if no worse! How often harbored thoughts and feelings which no human eye could see, within my breast! But Thou, God, sawest them all. O those depths of pride, ambition, selfishness, anger, hate, envy, sensual passion—Thy holy and all-seeing eye flashed light into them, though covered from human gaze! Many, many of these, the sins of my childhood and youth, are now hidden from my own sight, buried in the oblivion of the past! But not one of them is forgotten of Thee. All, all are present to Thy memory.

But, if there was nothing else against me, my neglect of duty to the God who made me, my want of a heart to remember Him and love Him—how great a crime! This covers my whole life with the blackness of guilt.

What a heart have I—a heart that refuses all love and obedience—a heart so cold and dead to all that is good—how must holy angels—how must Thou look on me!

Truly, though young, I have the evidence that I belong to a fallen race. I am the "degenerate plant of a strange vine." Thou only knowest the extent of the power of evil within me; and Thou only, who hast made me, canst form my soul anew to the image of Thy holiness. I have not loved to think of

this my sinful condition. I have rather desired to hide it from myself. Yet sometimes, in sickness or danger, or in some more than usually thoughtful hour, conscience speaks, and a shudder of dread comes over me at the thought of being called to meet my God. My own nature, in such an honest hour, cries out against me that I am a sinner.

O Thou who art "greater than my heart and knowest all things," give me to know my sins betimes, that I may, through Him who is the Saviour of sinners, old and young, be preserved from plunging into greater depths of transgression, and from incurring Thy awful wrath and curse in an endless life!

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY PIETY IS COMMENDED TO US BY THE CONSIDERATION THAT YOUTH IS THE BEST TIME FOR ACQUIRING ALL GOOD PRINCIPLES AND HABITS.

The period of our childhood and youth is the most fit time for learning everything. Who does not know this? It may be called the learning time of our existence in this world. Men, to a great extent, put in practice, in after years, just what they have been taught when they were children. God has, in fact, ordained this to be the period in which we are to become initiated in all the things that are most important to us, and to make preparation for after life. He has constituted our nature accordingly.

The mind is then in a plastic state; it readily receives impressions, and accommodates itself to change, adopts new habits, forms new attachments. And not only is there a far higher susceptibility, but the impressions, the sentiments, the habits and attachments which then gain possession of it are more lasting, by far, than those of subsequent date. Who has not observed how the old man retains the remembrance of things that occurred in the earliest dawn of life? The most minute facts stand in his memory like a fadeless picture, and he will, as if

reading from a book, give you every name and date of fifty years back, while the greatest events of yesterday are forgotten.

And so with our feelings. We usually love longest and best those whom we loved earliest, insomuch that the strength of early attachments has become proverbial.

And equally true is this in respect to our principles, our habits, and everything that constitutes character. So generally is it the fact, that we are accustomed, from what we see of a person in his youth, nay, in his very childhood,—to judge what he is to be in all his future life.

Nor do we often judge amiss. The boy makes the man, the girl the woman. "Just as the twig is bent the tree inclines." Hardly any truth is better known or more generally acted upon. It is for this reason that parents and teachers expend so much of effort in the education of the young; for this, that God gathers mankind into families, and places us, during the growing-up period, under the care of persons that are older.

Youth is the morning of life's day; the spring that precedes our summer and autumn; the seed-time that prepares the harvest. After-life is generally little more than the growing time of what is then sown. Does it not strike the youngest of my readers, how reasonable and important in view of these truths, that they should remember their Creator in their earliest years, and while they are learning other important and valuable things of every sort, be most intent on acquiring that which is far

above them all in its value and importance? Why has a particular message on the subject been sent to you in your youth, but for this very reason, that God sees you to be, just now, at the best of all periods of life for learning of Him?

But this is not all. Your heart is already getting its mould, one way or the other. If you have not, by a change of your nature, learned to love God and holiness, you already love and always have loved, the world and sin. If you have not been forming habits of religion, you have already begun to form those of an entirely opposite kind. And this is going on from bad to worse. Your habits, your feelings, are every day taking their impress and character more and more, under the influence of ungodliness. They are growing, as it were, into sin; sin growing into them. You are educating yourself in irreligion. You are building up in your own soul, even while you are young, a strong tower, for Satan to dwell in and shut God out.

How plain, that the beginning of life, its very beginning, is the most suitable time for the formation of religious character, and the commencement of a religious course. How mistaken the idea that religion will come more easily, or suit us any better, at some later stage of life!

When you have a rare plant or tree to rear, do you not take it and set it out as young as possible? Who that had a day's journey to perform, would be willing to lose the morning? Who that had a crop to plant, would let the seed-time pass by?

Our boyhood—our girlhood, is the germ of future

manhood and womanhood. Our youth is life's morning; it is life's, and generally eternity's seed-time. Even an infant's hand can turn the stream as it first struggles forth from the rock; but who can command it after it has pursued its onward course and become a deep-rolling river?

True, divine power can accomplish the great saving change at any period. "All things are possible with God." But this does not make it any the less true or manifest that you are now at the best stage of all your life for the acquisition of piety.

Besides, if you do not follow up the religious feelings, and the convictions of conscience that you now have, they may leave you. Whether in greater or less degree, they may be all that you will ever have. How many persons do you see converted after they have passed their juvenile years, especially if they be such as have enjoyed early religious advantages? It has been ascertained that a large majority of those who arrive at adult age without piety, live and die without it. The late Dr. Bedell of Philadelphia, said, that in the course of twenty years of pastoral labor, so far as he could recollect, not three persons over fifty years of age had been brought to Christ, under his ministry. Another eminent minister makes the declaration: "I would not say that none are converted in old age, but they are few and far between, like scattered grapes on the uppermost branches, after the vintage is gathered."

O then cherish, as your very life, the better

movings of your young heart, lest you be left to become an example of hardened impiety, and live longer, only to sin more grievously, and incur a more awful damnation! "Remember now, therefore, your Creator in the days of your youth."

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. xxxiv. 11).

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33).

"Unto man he said: Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job. xxviii. 28).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. i. 7).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm cxi. 10).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. xii. 13).

"The child shall die an hundred years old" (Isa. lxv. 20).

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. x. 20).

"This is eternal life, to know God" (John xvii. 3).

"Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

Hast thou, O Lord, given me the days of my childhood and youth that I may learn useful lessons and prepare for future life? Hast thou fitted my very nature for this important end? And shall it not be fulfilled in me? Hast thou made my young heart tender and open to impression so that it may better learn that which is good? And shall it

not be susceptible to all that concerns my duties to Thee and my immortal interests? Shall my whole youth be spent in the studying merely what will be of advantage to me in this world, and none of it be given to the study of those things which pertain to my everlasting welfare? What is time compared with eternity? And "what shall I be profited if I gain the whole world and lose my own soul?"

Shall I labor to acquire everything that will make me pleasing and valuable to my fellow-men, and not labor more to gain that which will please my God and advance His glory? Do I need the best teachers? do I prefer and honor such? do I cheerfully put myself under their direction? And shall I not, O my Father in heaven, seek Thy divine tuition, and learn, in this period so propitious for it, how to live according to thy will?

Be thou my teacher in my early days; and since I am taught that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, instil that fear into my bosom. Give me that highest and best of all knowledge, the knowledge of Thyself. Let my heart begin to love and fear Thee while it is tender; and leave me not to waste away these most precious years of my existence, without learning what, first of all, I ought to learn both to understand and do. Let me not be like too many of those around me, who, as they grow older, depart farther and farther from Thee. Let not my heart become hardened in folly and sin. Let it not be like the neglected and uncultivated earth which only becomes more hard and sterile, or more fruitful of thorns and briers, the more it receives of hea-

ven's sunshine and showers. But now, while it possesses still the sensibilities of youth, let it receive saving impressions and influences. Let me not lose any thoughts and desires that I have about my duty to Thee and my soul's salvation, lest I never have them again. Save me, for Christ's sake, from "hardening my heart." Let me not plunge into the depths of iniquity. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY PIETY GENERALLY HAS MUCH MORE OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND AID FROM OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES THAN A PIETY FORMED IN LATER YEARS.

The influence of persons and things around us upon our character and course of life, is far greater than we are apt to suppose. We are social beings. The opinions and example of others operate powerfully upon us. Indeed human character is generally formed in a great measure by influences from without. The woman, the man, are very much what they were made by the parents and teachers, or other persons, under whose influence they have grown up, and the circumstances in the midst of which they have lived. We can hardly tell the power of these social and external influences upon us in respect to what we are and what is to become of us.

Do you hope, so far as these are concerned, that you are to gain anything by postponing attention to your spiritual duties and interests? Do you suppose that after a while they will be on the side of religion and of your soul's welfare? So far from it, these mighty influences will array their power more and more against you, the longer you live in an irreligious state.

I do not say that these influences are all of them favorable while you are young, even in the best supposable case. Alas! you have already had too much reason to know that you live in a fallen world, and breathe an infected atmosphere. But will the difficulties arising from these outward causes lessen by your delay? They are far less now than you can expect them to be at any future time. They are increasing upon you every day. Satan and the world oppose themselves now to your becoming a Christian. Will these enemies of your soul ever become less hostile? Will they not, on the contrary, gain greater courage and power to work your ruin, by your waiting and yielding? All the advantage gained by so doing, will be on their side, not yours. Will not your own heart all the while be growing more and more in love with the world and with sin, and less able to resist their seductions? Who would hope to defend a city better after leaving its gates open, for months and years, to the free passage of its enemies?—who expect to break off intemperate habits the more readily after years of daily drinking?

As respects our indulgence in worldliness and sin, it is precisely as with the drunkard; the more he drinks, the more he loves the cup, and the less able he becomes to put it away from him. If you delay in this matter, yours will be the folly not merely of the man who waited for the river to run by, but rather of one who should stand cowardly or careless all the day on the bank of a yet fordable stream, while he saw the torrent every moment swelling higher and

becoming more impassable. The flood that divides you from the place of safety and peace is rolling stronger and deeper, every moment you linger. Do you want proof of this? Look around you and see for yourself. Do people who are not already Christians generally show more inclination to piety as they grow in years? Comparing the two classes, has the aged man more religious thought and feeling than the boy? Whence do nearly all the converts come, from the ranks of the old or the young? Is the progress of life, with those who are postponing religion, a progress towards God and heaven, or just the reverse? Young as you may be, you are old enough to give the answer.

And, as with others, so it will be with you, if you continue this putting off. As years roll on, the cares of life will occupy your mind with an absorbing power of which you now can form little idea. Instead of having more, you will have less of leisure, by far, than you now have for reading, prayer, and spiritual cultivation.

Those golden hours of youthful leisure and freedom from care—how many, even of the pious, look back to them with a sigh! They are fast flitting away from you. With your future years, reverses will perhaps come, poverty stare you in the face, and fill you with anxieties even for daily bread; debts accumulate upon you and harass you day and night, so that you will feel that "the evil days" have indeed come, and that you can hardly give a moment or a thought to the concerns of your soul. And even prosperity, with its increase of property

and its expansion of worldly interests, will leave you less and less of leisure, and place new obstacles continually in your way back to God and heaven.

You will form, every year of your life, new acquaintances, new friendships, new connexions; and as these multiply, every new one will probably be a fresh link in the chain that already binds you to the world; insomuch that, as regards the circumstances and influences around you, as well as your own feelings, there will not only be less probability, at any future time, of a change on your part to a life of piety, but less and less probability of it every day that you live. Yes! the time will probably come when, in adult years, your thoughts will revert to those very "days of youth" through which you are passing, and you will wish you had them back again, and were as free as you now are, from the bonds which you will by that time have bound upon yourself, almost too strongly to be sundered. And if you live to those future years that you hope for—live no longer than to middle age—some that would now help you on the way to heaven—pious parents, teachers, schoolmates, friends, will then be gone—either living far away or lying in the silent grave. You will not then, when perhaps you will most need it, have them to counsel and warn you, to pray for and with you, to cheer you on your Zionward way by their company and example. Those will truly be "evil days" to you whether you feel it to be so or not. Oh! you know not how much of providential restraint and providential help may now

be thrown around you, of which you may hereafter be bereft.

There is no telling, how great a calamity may and oftentimes does come upon a young person, in the loss of godly parents or friends; and, if you will not heed their counsels and tears, God may, as a judgment upon you, take these best of his earthly gifts away, and thus by His very providence, say of you, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone!"

"And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. iii. 15).

"The unfeigned faith which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice" (2 Tim. i. 15).

"After the death of Jehoida, * * * * they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers; * * * * and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass" (2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18).

"And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua" (Josh. xxiv. 31).

"And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell" (Luke x. 15).

"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke viii. 18).

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace" (Luke xix. 42).

PRAYER.

Take not from me, O my Father, who hast given them all to me, the privileges of my childhood and youth. Remember not against me my want of

gratitude for them and my past neglects to improve them. Let not all the sunny hours of my youthful leisure be wasted in worldliness and sin. Let not the cares of life, which I see so absorbing and consuming with most of the older around me, come in and possess me, before I have secured Thy favor and the safety of my soul. Let me not be left without a renewed heart, and at the same time without the help of godly companionship and counsel, to meet the temptations of an evil world, where so many have lost their souls; for if, with so much to favor me now, I have done nothing for my everlasting interests, what will become of me then?

Cast me not, as I am, O God, where Thy Sabbaths, Thy word, Thy name, have none to honor them. Leave me not, in my unchanged state, to the company, the example, the influence of only the godless. Spare my pious parents, my faithful minister and teachers, my sweet young Christian companions, and let me be one in heart with them. Let me not be separated from them in life, let me not bid them farewell on their dying beds, if they are to die first, until I partake of the same grace and the same hope with them. Let me be able to say to them, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And so, whether in life or in death, O God, for Christ's sake, "gather not my soul with sinners."

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY PIETY IS THE ONLY FIT PREPARATION FOR THE DUTIES, TRIALS, AND DANGERS OF AFTER LIFE.

It is the common idea of religion, I know, that it is something to be got or to be put on, as a matter of arbitrary appointment on the part of our Maker, or because, if necessary at all, it is necessary only to prepare us for a different state of being in a future world. Nothing can be more false than such a view. Existence and action in another world are only a continuance of our existence and action in this world. We shall be essentially the same beings there that we are here. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."

The same preparation, therefore, which we need for a future and endless state of existence, is needed to make us what we ought to *be* in the present world.

Religion is not something merely to be put on to shield us from future wrath. It ought to be a part of our very being. It ought to mingle with all our thoughts and feelings, and control all the actions of our lives. What is religion but love to God and to our fellow-creatures? It belongs to the nature of

all celestial beings, and is its highest glory. In losing—as we of this world have done, in the great apostasy—the holiness of our nature, we have lost the guide and glory of our existence; and until we recover it, we can never live aright. As we cannot end life, just as much ought we to feel that we cannot spend it or begin it rightly, without the love and fear of our Maker in our hearts.

And who but God Himself can either direct us how to live, or enable us to live as we ought? A regard for the will of Him who made us is the rule, the only right rule of human action; and therefore it is religion only that can give us the proper preparation for living in this world. That preparation must be obtained while we are young. We must take with us, when we go forth into adult life, principles, habits, character formed for it from childhood, and formed as God would have them to be.

Without His aid you cannot even make a right choice of its pursuits; you cannot discharge its duties, you cannot bear its trials as you ought. If you go forth into the world without it, you go to the great battle that is to decide your destinies without any armor on, and you will be likely to fall and perish.

Why do we study and labor, through all the years of childhood and youth, with great expenditure of money, and under the most skilful masters we can obtain, but that we may, by human instruction and science, fit ourselves for the part which we are to act in future life? How much more ought we, while young, to acquire the knowledge of God and become

imbued with His love, in order that we may live as we ought, and fulfil the end for which He created us and placed us here! The duties of life are twofold, as they have respect to God and to our fellowmen. How can we properly discharge those of either class without the guidance and help of Him who made us; and what are we to expect if we go rashly on, in opposition to His will and counsel? His word is designed to be the rule of our life in this world as well as the light to guide us to a better state. And not only are we furnished with this heavenly "lamp," but the divine illuminations and aids of the Spirit are promised also to those who seek them.

Do you feel yourself to be independent of such help, even for this world? Who of us can know the future? Who foresee its calls of duty, its difficulties, its troubles, its perils, its end, but the God whose hand has launched us forth upon this state of being? Who better than He—who else indeed than He—can anticipate them and provide for them? Can you tell how arduous duties you may be called to perform, to what trials of principle you may be subjected, what sorrows may overwhelm you in your passage through the world? And how, except by His direction and aid, can you live to please Him who holds in His hands your destinies for this life and for eternity?

Would any of us venture, inexperienced, without a pilot, without chart or compass, to embark his all upon an unknown and dangerous ocean? Of such rashness and folly is every one guilty that goes

forth into life without the Bible, and without God, to guide him in its daily duties. It is only His grace, given through Christ, that can fit you either to live or to die. You need it to set out with. It is not the proper time to seek it after you have gone forth into life's busy scenes; for who would trust to girding on his armor after the battle had begun, or fitting out for a voyage after he was upon the ocean?

Nor is it enough to say that it is with God, and Him only, to foresee the future of our existence. It is with Him not only to foresee but to control it. Prosperity, adversity, life itself and death,—in whose hands are they but His? And do you not desire, will you not insure for yourself His favor, His almighty protection and guidance, before you make your venture upon that sea where so many have perished, and where without such heavenly guidance shipwreck and ruin must surely await you, and may come before a single day shall pass? If, for an ocean passage, you might secure not only an infallible chart, but a pilot whose power and skill could control the very winds and waves, would you not choose it?

I trust that many sunny days of health and prosperity will be vouchsafed to you, dear youthful reader, if God sees it good for you that it should be so. But we need divine grace even to enjoy prosperity as we ought, and rightly to use God's providential gifts. Indeed it is an error as great as it is common, to think that religion is needed only or merely for adversity. It is in every respect "the one thing needful." It is as essential to us in prosperity as adversity. Nothing is more hardening,

nothing more dangerous to the soul, than outward prosperity without piety to sanctify and regulate it; so much so, that our Saviour Himself declared it to be "easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

You need divine grace to prevent the attainment of worldly good from proving your very destruction. Perhaps the greatest curse that God could inflict on you would be to grant you, in your present unrenewed state, the desires of your heart, in giving you health, riches, and worldly distinctions. "Nor [give me] riches, lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" And would not such days of unsanctified prosperity, if granted you, prove, above all others, "evil days," instead of good?

But "evil days" of another kind—those which we are most apt to dread as such—are certainly coming to you. It is your wisdom to prepare for them beforehand. That sparkling eye is to be dimmed, that bright face to be shaded by many a sorrow, if you live; for if life, with you, be prolonged to many years, it will be only to survive those whom you love best, and you will have to suffer the pangs of bereavement, besides all those to which you are liable from ill health and disappointment. Who can tell what to-morrow may bring forth? Who of us can know what calamities and griefs are to fall upon him before his course on earth is ended? Are you prepared for them?

But there is yet another important view of the matter. I should greatly fail if I did not present it.

The evils we have to apprehend in this world are not, after all, entirely, or even mainly from without. The worst troubles proceed from within ourselves. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man."

Unholy and unrestrained passions, harbored in our own bosoms, beget most of our miseries. Has not your own experience already proved this? Are you not obliged to confess that most of the unhappiness of your own life, thus far, has proceeded from this source? What sorrow can we not bear, when the heart is at peace with itself and God? But when passion rages or conscience upbraids, what is a palace but a gilded dungeon?

If there is ever a foretaste of hell on earth, it is sometimes in a human soul where anger, malice, ambition, envy, lust, hold their fiend-like dominion. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest."

And what grief is keener than that of remorse? Even little things bring its pain, and when once it has fastened upon us, we may feel its fang till our dying day. You know not the evil that lies—perhaps hidden beneath a surface yet smooth and fair—in the inner depths of your depraved nature. God only knows it fully, and if you have not His grace to restrain and correct it, you cannot tell what mischief it may bring upon you. Hazael said (2 Kings viii. 13), "Is thy servant a dog, that he

should do this thing?" and yet before many years he became a murderer, an usurper, a cruel oppressor of God's people. Young persons have been known who, having once had as firm a faith in the Bible as yourself, afterwards became bold and hardened sceptics; or who, as innocent and amiable as you now are, yet, before their career was far run, had dyed their hands in the blood of murder, or plunged deep into other vices and crimes that involved them and many around them in misery. Every human bosom is a sleeping volcano. Every sinful heart contains within it the elements of hell. Dare not to say that, without God, you are safe. The very boast may prove your destruction. Do not venture without His protection, where so many, once as good as you, have made shipwreck of character and peace.

But let us suppose that you never know the wretchedness of crime, or even the torments of fierce passion. Still the happiness of life depends, more than anything else, on the regulation of your tempers and feelings in the little things of every-day occurrence. Do you want any better regulation than religion will afford in the influences which it will bring down, like morning and evening dews, upon your spirit?

Even when our proud hearts refuse to acknowledge any criminality, evil passions that rage within us darken our sky with black clouds. Do you wish to be saved from such unhappiness day after day in your coming life? Let the heart be properly kept, and nothing can destroy our peace. And who but

the Being who made you can set your nature right or keep it so?

How great then—how unspeakably great—in respect to the preparation for any vicissitudes or conflicts yet to come, the advantage of those whose hearts, from early life, have been brought under the influence of true godliness! Oh, how much more smoothly and pleasantly may those who are thus furnished and fitted beforehand, expect to pass over life's rough sea—that sea whose tempests, O inexperienced young voyagers, you have yet to try! To them, in a certain sense, the roughness of the billows is already smoothed before they pass.

Blessed with God's favor and the indwelling of the Spirit, what have you to fear from all the world or all the universe? Your very sorrows will be sweetened and turned into means of good. The clouds you dread will come wafting heaven's blessings. All things shall work together for your good. Influences from above shall distil upon you by day and night; and the Spirit shall breathe on your soul, when disturbed by care or agitated by passion, those soft, sweet airs which do not ruffle but soothe.

You will be able to look around you at the most threatening scene, and into the dark future that is before you, with calm serenity, and even to think of death without dismay. We are told of a child, who, unterrified in a storm at sea, was asked the reason of his wonderful composure. "My father is at the helm," was the beautiful reply. Who of us would not wish to be able, when the clouds and stormy

days of trouble come, to look up to Him, who is Almighty, All-wise, All-good, and say, "My Father is at the helm?" Who would not choose such a preparation as faith and prayer will minister, both for life and for death—such a preparation as God will give to all who "remember Him in the days of their youth?"

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23).

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. cxix. 9).

"A lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105).

"Whoso hearkeneth unto wisdom shall dwell safely" (Prov. i. 33).

"I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken" (Ps. xxxvii. 25).

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8).

"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Ex. xxxiii. 15).

"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good" (Numb. x. 29).

PRAYER.

O God, Thou knowest all things from the beginning; the future as well as the present and the past. And Thy power—Thine only—reaches into that future of my existence which I can neither foreknow nor control.

I would humbly recognise my dependence and crave Thy guidance and keeping in time to come. I know not what a day may bring forth; what is before me of self-denying duty, of temptation and affliction, of danger to my soul; or when my life itself shall end. All these are with Thee both to know and to order. And thou only canst fit me to meet them. By Thy help I shall pass through them safely and happily; and even the winds and waves of trouble shall but speed my way onward to a better state.

Father, leave me not to my own wisdom and strength, lest they prove to be utter folly and impotence, to my shame and sorrow both in this life and in that which is to come. Young, inexperienced, sinful, and weak, how shall I stand, with such fearful odds against me as Satan, the world, and my own treacherous heart, all combined? How go forth into the great struggle of life without the preparations of Thy grace? How fulfil the great end of my being but under the direction and with the help of Him who made me?

Undertake Thou for me, O my God. Be the "guide of my youth," and then I know that Thou wilt also be my helper in the toils and conflicts of coming years, should I be spared, and the stay of declining life, when old age or death shall come, so that they prove not "evil days to me."

Grant this for the sake of Him who tasted sorrow and death for sinners such as I am.

CHAPTER X.

EARLY PIETY AFFORDS GREAT ADVANTAGES IN THE PROSECUTION OF A CHRISTIAN COURSE THROUGH THE WHOLE OF LIFE.

All that was said in Chapter VII. will apply here. If, in the constitution of our nature, youth is ordained to be our time for learning and acquiring the things which are to be most valuable to us in after life, then it is plain that those whose religious course begins with early years will have every advantage in pursuing it afterwards.

Not only is it far less probable that those who put off religion to the very close of life, or to its more advanced stages, will ever be converted at all, but, even where this takes place, they are able to accomplish much less in the Christian life than if they had begun in better time. Nor will they enjoy the same rewards and benefits of God's service, as we are most clearly taught in the parable of the talents and other parts of Scripture. It would seem as if argument here were hardly needful. If the Bible taught us nothing on the subject, there is manifestly but one decision that our own reason could make. Which of the two, let me ask, is to be expected to achieve most in the spiritual life either for himself or

others, he who consecrates to God the dew of his youth, and from his very childhood begins a life of useful action; or he that with tardy and tottering step, and nerves all paralysed by worldly and sinful indulgences, comes to drag out a few years in the same service? Do men begin their education, or go apprentices to a trade after they have grown old? Do they even in middle life? And what progress would most of them make, if they did? Or do we send the elderly men to the battle-field and not rather those in whom the fires of youthful ardor and energy are still unquenched? And so in religion. Facts prove it. The whole history of the church, from the earliest old Testament times, shows that those whose piety dates from childhood and early youth are generally those who make the highest spiritual attainments, and are most honored of God as the instruments of good to their fellow-men. I shall presently cite instances in illustration.

And it is just what we should expect. "Young men, ye are strong," said the Apostle John. There is an elasticity, an ardor, an activity and energy about the youthful character which may be made of great value to ourselves and others in the service of God; and he that begins his work earliest is certainly able to accomplish most. How can a person in half a day, or less, effect what he might do in the entire day? True, he may be very diligent and may do a great deal in a little time; but with the same diligence, applied for a longer period, and under all the advantages of an early outset, how much more, beyond comparison, might he not accomplish?

But this holds the more true, in the case now before us, inasmuch as when one enters upon a Christian life, he has a double task to perform. He has not only to become initiated in the love and practice of what is positively good, but he has to unlearn what is bad; and this, so far as his feelings and habits have any relation to religion, is the unlearning of all that he ever learned before. Not only has he to strive and pray, day by day, after the Christian virtues of penitence, faith, love, meekness, humility, spirituality, but to strive and pray also, daily, against the impenitency, unbelief, pride, ambition, covetousness, sensuality, to which he has heretofore resigned himself. Will these, O youthful procrastinator, readily release you from the serpent folds with which they are now, every hour, more and more entwining you?

There are wounds which, though healed, leave a person crippled or deformed for life; there are diseases from which you may recover, but only with a broken constitution, never again to enjoy the same vigor of health; there are poisons of which you may drink and live, and yet live only to suffer the effects of them in every vein and every limb. So it is with sin, always so, in a greater or less degree. No one can ever indulge in it without suffering some evil consequences from so doing; the longer you continue such indulgence, the longer and the worse will you feel these consequences. And remember that evil, as well as good, grows with years and much more rapidly. Weeds grow faster than anything else. If the change from irreligion to godliness ever

does take place in you after your early years have passed away—and we have seen what probability there is of this—you will be obliged not only to deny inclinations long indulged, but to break the habits of all your former life;—and who does not know the power of habit? These inclinations, these habits, will then exercise their power, not only to hinder you from beginning the religious life at all, but to harass you through all its subsequent course. These constitute, to a great degree, the "cross" which our Saviour requires you to take up. If you feel it too hard a thing for you to deny yourself now, will it be easier then? If that cross is too much now for you to bear, how much lighter, think you, will it have become at that future time?

Do you say that divine grace can effect the greatest changes? Very true; but we have reason to believe that God generally leaves those who have long neglected their duties to Him to suffer, in some degree, the effects of that neglect, even to the end of life. Your very return to God will be rendered more difficult by procrastination and evil indulgence. If, after long wandering, your eyes are opened, the distance back will seem almost immeasurable, the obstacles mountain high. "O," said an aged man, struggling in darkness under convictions of sin, "if, as some around me are doing, I had but turned my attention to religion while I was young, how different it might now have been with me!" Bunyan, while yet in his wickedness, being reproved by a lady for his profanity, stood silent, and hanging down his head, said to himself: "O, how I wish I

might be a little child again, that my father might teach me to speak without this wicked way of swearing!"

And so, to a greater or less extent, will it be with you, even after you shall actually have entered upon a Christian course, if yours should be one of the unusual cases of those who are converted late in life; you will drag with you long and heavily the clogs of your former state. God will help you to bear the cross, but you will always feel it. There is "a sin that easily besets" even the Christian. Have you ever known a person that became pious in advanced life, who, while he bewailed, as every true Christian does, the loss of all the time in which he lived without religion, did not also tell you how he daily and sorely felt still the effects of his long continuance in forbidden ways? And why will you persist in a career which will cause you nothing but grief and loss in time to come, if it does not end in the ruin of your soul; why embitter the happiness which religion is capable of affording you; why sow a harvest of tares for your own hands to gather and winnow; why blight your soul with a mildew which will show its rank mould as long as you stay in the atmosphere of a fallen world; why hope to be God's servant hereafter and yet do everything now to unfit yourself for that service; why, I may add, expect the happiness of heaven and yet live, the best part of your days, in a way that will least prepare you for it?

The remarks that I have been making as to the advantage of an early beginning, in reference to our

progress in holy attainment, apply equally to the question of our usefulness. God has appointed for every one of us a sphere of beneficent action. He has given us, every one, a work to do in His service on earth. He has made us not for ourselves only, but to serve Him and our race. This truth, men seem to lose sight of, but it is one of the great truths of the Bible (see Matt. xxv. 25–28, and 34–45).

This is forcibly and beautifully expressed by Dr. Payson. "Not for ourselves but others," he says, "is the grand law of nature, inscribed by the hand of God on every part of creation. Not for itself but others, does the sun dispense its beams; not for themselves but others, do the clouds distil their showers; not for herself but others, does the earth unlock her treasures; not for themselves but others, do the trees produce their fruits, or the flowers diffuse their fragrance and display their various hues. So not for himself but others, are the blessings of heaven bestowed upon man; and whenever, instead of diffusing them around, he devotes them to his own gratification, and shuts himself up in the dark and flinty caverns of selfishness, he transgresses the great law of creation."

And if God has appointed for you, in this world of sin, and sorrow, and need, a service commensurate with the utmost extent of your powers and the utmost limits of your life, how great the work before you! Is it not incumbent on you now, even in your earliest years, to be doing all the good you can in the world, and is not this the very way to learn how, and to fit yourself for usefulness through all

your future years? And what an angelic, what a godlike art and service, for you to be making proficiency in! How much better, for reasons that have been before us, the opportunities of progress and success, on the part of those who begin the study and practice of it with youth on their side! Is not everything best acquired at your time of life? And how can a person do, for the church and the world, in ten years of his latter life, what he could do in forty or fifty, with the advantage of youthful training and practice?

This, however, is not all. You cannot travel year after year through life, without leading other souls, perhaps many, in the same path with yourself. Of this I have already reminded you. But let us suppose that you at last repent and barely escape perdition; what will become of your companions? How will you undo the mischief you have done them? Some of the number will probably be gone to eternity, and you will then be able to do no more than weep for them tears of unavailing anguish. But, if living, they will probably be among the many who, after spending their youth as you and they are now doing, remain impenitent through life; and should you hereafter even go and tell them of your repentance, in order to counteract the evil you have done in their case, it will probably be only to meet with their derision. You will find yourself too late; and instead of your leading them, your conversion will separate you from them. Oh, if you had but undertaken this when you and they were young, how different might have been the result!

Beginning a life of piety now, others might, and probably would, be led by your example to "remember their Creator" also "in the days of their youth." Perhaps many would. How great, oftentimes, the influence of one young friend over another! Your brothers—your sisters—your schoolmates and companions—can you tell how many of them might be made Christians, through your Heavenly Father's blessing upon your prayers, your pious words, your conscientious and holy example?

Your becoming a Christian may, of itself, powerfully impress their minds. Nothing speaks to a youthful and warm heart like the conversion and public profession of a young friend. The feelings of your companions, like your own, are now tender and susceptible. It will not be so always.

And even your parents and older friends, if yet irreligious, may be led to the love and fear of God, by what they see in you, and in answer to your youthful prayers. How much good may you thus do, even before your early days are over; how much in a whole lifetime spent in that way from its very beginning. Who of us, till he tries, can tell what he may accomplish for the welfare of the world? And how great a part of all this must be lost to God's service, to your fellow-men, to yourself, if you suffer youth to run away without making any beginning of the work which your Maker has given you to do! Are you willing to lose such opportunities, and lose them for ever?

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth

unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Is. xl. 31).

"They go from strength to strength" (Ps. lxxxiv. 7).

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Ps. ix. 13, 14).

"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job xvii. 9).

"The child [John Baptist] grew, and waxed strong in spirit" (Luke i. 80).

"The child [Jesus] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke ii. 40).

"Thou wicked and slothful servant, * * * * thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."

"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness" (Matt. xxv. 26, 27, 30).

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, * * * * henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8).

"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

I must acknowledge all that I have been reading in this chapter to be most true and reasonable. If I am to be a Christian at all, shall I not be one with my whole heart? Shall I not be worth something —nay, as much as I possibly can—to the cause of

God and the interests of the fallen race to which I belong? In the light of a future world and looking back from the far remote tracts of a coming eternity, how little will all appear that I shall or can accomplish, in this life, for myself or others, in the service of my Maker! Shall I then leave more than half the rich harvest ungathered,—more than half the golden fruit unplucked?

O Thou whose I am, and whom I ought to love and serve continually and faithfully and fully, let me enter upon this service now while I am young, and before I am clogged with worldly cares. Let me not bury one "talent." Let no soul perish that I might be the means of saving. Let me not, in a dying hour, at thy judgment bar, or in the never ceasing memories of eternity, look back upon anything as left undone that I ought to have done; but let me, through Thy grace, fulfil all that Thou hast given me to do—all that, by the utmost exertion of the powers Thou hast endowed me with, I can do, for a lost world, while I live in it. Let me begin now in the morning of my life, and let my last hour find me still at my post, growing in holiness, laboring in Thy work, and rejoicing that all my days were spent for Thee.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY, AS SET FORTH IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER, APPEAR IN NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF SCRIPTURE BIOGRAPHY.

I HAVE referred to the history of the world, as showing the truth of what has been said of the effect of early formed religious character on the holiness and usefulness of following life. If you are a reader of the Bible, examples in proof will occur to your own mind. Certainly some of the most eminent and honored of all God's servants mentioned in Scripture records were of the class to which I wish you to belong, of those who sought and loved Him in early life.

The son of a mother's prayers who became both the chief ruler of God's people, and one of the most eminent of His prophets (1 Sam. i., ii., iii., especially i. 27, 28; ii. 26)—the youth whom God took from the "sheep-cote" and placed on the throne over the same people, and who was still more highly honored in being the inspired writer of the most poetical and devotional part of the sacred volume (Ps. lxxi. 5, 17; with 1 Sam. xvii.)—that other shepherd boy, whose story forms the most romantic and beautiful biography ever written; who, himself narrowly escaping violent death, carried away into hopeless

exile and slavery, and even made the tenant of a prison, became in God's wonderful providence the grand vizier of a kingdom the most civilized and powerful of that period, and in rising to this station became also the savior of his family and of the elect race (Gen. xxxvii. to xxxix.)—the young Jew of royal lineage who, doomed to a like exile froma conquered and ruined country, after a miraculous deliverance from cruel death, which he braved for religion's sake in a pagan land, rose to a like station in the then ruling empire of the world, and threw a powerful influence in behalf of God's captive people into the imperial courts of Babylon and Persia, and was distinguished above almost all the prophets in the revelations made to him—the three companions of his youth and his exile, whose names have been embalmed to us in sacred story, who, like him, exposing themselves to martyrdom for God and the truth, were in like manner rescued and elevated to places of honor (Dan. i., iii., vi.)—the royal officer whose piety shone like a star in midnight darkness, at the court of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings xviii. 12)—the boy king who, when a mere child, began to reform Israel, and brought about a great revival of true religion in declining times (2 Kings xxii.; 2 Chronicles xxxiv. 3)—and then, that other child of prayer who became, as our Saviour Himself declared, the greatest of all the prophets, whom He eulogized as He never did any other man, whose honor it was—the highest of all human honors—to herald the coming Messiah, and then to baptize Him; and whose preaching, that stirred the slumbering

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mind of a whole nation as perhaps no man's ever did, made him the greatest of preachers the world has ever seen (Luke i. 15, 80)—what a list of encouraging examples for the young! One of these at least, as I wish you especially to notice—and he it is that holds perhaps the highest place, of all mere men, in Scripture history—was a person whose piety was that of a whole lifetime, from its earliest period. This was true of John the Baptist, as it may also have been of others among those whose names have just been mentioned. And have not your very first studies of the New Testament furnished you a higher example of the kind, in Him who came not only to die for us, but to show us how to live? To these illustrious examples of Samuel, David, Joseph, Daniel, Obadiah, Josiah, John, about which we are certainly informed, as being examples of early piety, we perhaps would be authorized in adding the names of Abel, the first of God's servants ever persecuted and martyred; of Abraham the "friend of God," the "father of the faithful," the chosen head of the chosen race; of Isaac, the next of the patriarchs of Israel; of Moses, the statesman, the general, the lawgiver, the historian, the poet, the prophet, the leader of the tribes to the promised land, the writer of the world's primitive history and of some of the most important portions of the Bible, whom we may certainly call one of the greatest men the world has ever produced; of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the great prophets whom God raised up to instruct, to comfort, and reform His people in their captivity and its previous calamities, and whose writings form

some of the largest and most interesting prophetical books of the Old Testament (Jer. i. 5 and Ezek. iv. 14)—of Timothy, the young companion and fellow-missionary of the great apostle, honored so much with his friendship, the person to whom he addressed two epistles of the sacred canon (2 Tim. iii. 15). In regard to all of these cases, there is ground for strong probable conjecture of early piety, in circumstances actually mentioned in the sacred narrative; and if we may add them to the undoubted instances above mentioned, we have a catalogue of the early pious, furnished by the Bible itself, which embraces no inconsiderable portion of those whose names stand most conspicuous on its pages, as distinguished for high spiritual character, and for the eminent stations of usefulness which they filled.

But it is to be remembered that in the larger proportion of the cases of good and useful men whose names occur in Bible history, the biography is very brief and partial, and no account is given of the early part of the person's life. Who can tell, therefore, were the facts supplied, how many more might be added to the brilliant galaxy of clear instances from among the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other eminent saints of God? If so great a number of the persons whose youthful life is actually described in sacred history, are found to have been living a life of piety in early years, what a strong presumption does it afford that an equal proportion of the rest would have exhibited instances of the same kind, had their cases been fully known? If the catalogue were thus completed, would we not

probably find it to embrace a large majority of those whom the Bible holds up before us as the greatest and best men of the church, the most blessed of God themselves, and made most a blessing to mankind. And the fact that, among those whose earlier history is given in holy writ, we find such a number of instances of early formed religious character, while it affords the strongest encouragement to the young themselves, ought to lead us to inquire why it is that these instances are not far more numerous now.

But, beloved young friends, when you are tempted to neglect prayer, Bible reading, sabbath keeping, God and religion, "in the days of your youth," think of Joseph, Samuel, and the many worthies whose names are, I trust, familiar to you from your own reading of the Bible, and who, while young, maintained prayer, feared God, and showed a pious zeal, in times of religious declension, in foreign lands, in exile, in captivity, in the dungeon, in the den of wild beasts, in the fires of the martyr furnace, but above all, amid the utmost blandishments which power, wealth, and sensuality could throw around them, to draw them away from God. Was there ever greater constancy in God's fear than that of the young Hebrew, as related in the thirty-ninth chapter of Genesis: more heroic firmness and devotion to God than were shown by the four young martyrs of Babylon—for they were virtually martyrs; or more noble zeal for the interests of religion than that of the royal boy of whom the books of Kings and Chronicles tell us?

These are examples pictured before all youthful readers of the Bible, of what men may become and can do where they begin early, and are long in the service of God. Do you wish to be like them? Imitate them in obeying the divine call, to "remember your Creator" in your youth. Seek the renewing and indwelling of that same Spirit which filled the soul of the great Forerunner from his birth. Like him, begin your life with God, if you would, like him, have it said of you, when you are gone from the world, that while you were in it, you "fulfilled your course" and were a burning and a shining light.

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance" (Ps. cxii. 6).

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1).

"And mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. iii. 17).

"Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. xiii. 7).

"That every one of you do show the same diligence; * * * * that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. vi. 11, 12).

"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him" (1 Sam. xxv. 1).

"He [John Baptist] was a burning and a shining light" (John v. 35).

"Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke vii. 28).

"We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. xii. 1).

"Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners" (Heb. xii. 5).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

Joseph, Samuel, David, Daniel, John! Sweet names to every youthful reader of the Bible! Who would not wish to be like them? Who does not feel that it would be good to spend his early years as they spent theirs? Who does not desire to be such a child as Samuel, or John Baptist, such a youth as Joseph, David, or Daniel? Can I ever forget the glow of admiration and pleasure with which I first read about them in my Bible, or heard the story from my father or my mother? Those truly great and good persons, of whose youthful sanctity I read in Scripture, are now gone from this world. Some of them have been in heaven two or three thousand years. And if it gives me pleasure to read of what they were, and of what they did for God's glory, and the good of the world, in their young days here on earth, how much more pleasure does it afford them to think of it? A childhood, a youth of piety, is it not the brightest jewel in the crown of glory, which they now wear—would they be willing to live differently, if they could come back to this world, and pass their probation over again? Could they cherish now any desire in regard to their lives here, except that they had lived more for God than they did? And how shall I wish that I had spent my days when my life on earth is done, and through all eternity? Will I not then esteem it better to have lived and served God as they did, than to have enjoyed all the wealth,

and all the fleeting honors of this world? I am now where they once were. When I go to that eternity where they are, I can never come back here to live my life over. And even in the present existence, when once I am old, I cannot become young again. The opportunities which I now enjoy, when once gone, will return no more for ever. If I do not make a beginning now, my life can never be like that of the holy persons whose names are cited in the pages before me.

O Thou great and blessed One, whose love and glory they are enjoying above the skies, let me be like Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, Josiah, like John the Baptist; but above all, like the child Jesus. Let my life here on earth, let the days of my youth, be spent like theirs, and then I shall enjoy for ever the same rewards of Thy grace in which they are now rejoicing. Grant this, for the sake of that Redeemer to whom all Thy saints of the Old Testament times looked forward, through sacrifices and signs, as a Saviour to come, and to whom all Thy saints of New Testament times look back, as a Saviour come, and through whom all alike must enter heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY ARE, IN LIKE MANNER, ILLUSTRATED BY MANY INSTANCES IN THE CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY OF LATER AGES.

In the last chapter examples were adduced from Scripture history, to show the value of early piety, in its influence upon the holiness and usefulness of subsequent life. To the names there given, which shine with such radiance in the firmament of the ancient church of the Old and New Testament, I will now add some from the biography of later times. They will be such as my young readers will probably find themselves already acquainted with, as those of some of God's most eminent servants. Perhaps the library of the family, or the sabbath-school, has furnished you with the memoirs of the greater part of these excellent and truly illustrious persons; and the names are inscribed on your memory, as if in characters of heaven's own light.

The first example that I shall cite, is that of a personage whose name and character are familiar to all readers of English history. In Edward VI., as in the Josiah of Scripture, we behold the instance of a pious boy-king; and in this station of royalty —the most difficult, perhaps, for piety, of all human

positions—he served God with noble fidelity, through a life and a reign adorned by elegant accomplishments, as well as devotion and beneficence, which terminated in his sixteenth year.

Lady Jane Grey, with whose name we are equally well acquainted, also added the loveliness of youthful piety to the lustre of her remarkable early talents and acquirements.

The reputation of Theodore Beza will ever endure as a man of learning, a theologian, and a promoter of the reformation in Switzerland and France. His devotion to God, according to his own statement, began at the age of sixteen.

Bishop Hall, of England, was one of the most eminently pious men of modern times; and his works have been greatly blessed to the comfort and edification of Christians. Before the close of his life, which was prolonged to eighty-one years, he said: "O God, thou knowest how sincerely and heartily, in those my young years, I did cast myself upon thy hands."

The Rev. Philip Henry "was noted," as we are told, "for three things: piety, industry, and self-denial;" and was remembered by his Christian friends as the "great, good, glorious Mr. Henry." He was blessed too in being the father of such a son as Matthew Henry. Though brought up at the court of Charles I. and a companion of the young princes, his mind seems from his early youth to have been very much under the power of religion. This was owing, in great measure, to the instrumentality of pious parents, especially of his mother. Speaking

of this, he says: "If ever any child from ten to fifteen enjoyed line upon line, precept upon precept, I did; and I trust, not in vain." He seems to have dedicated himself to God at about fifteen years of age; at which time he was admitted to the Lord's Supper.

Matthew Henry, whose admirable commentary on the Scriptures has made his name so well known, was the son just spoken of; and he, like his father, had a deep, thorough religious experience at an early age, giving clear evidence of piety by the time that he was eleven years old. His sister, known in after life as Mrs. Savage, was likewise an example both of early intellectual powers and attainments and of early religion. She lived to the age of eighty-eight, and through nearly all those years was a child of God.

Baxter, Richard Baxter—who has not known something of him, through his "Saint's Rest" and "Call to the Unconverted," if not in the history of his life of godly toil and suffering and usefulness? He was decidedly converted by the time that he was fifteen years of age. But he had strongly felt the influence of religion for many years before, and was himself not sure that the date of his spiritual change might not be placed earlier.

England cherishes the name of Sir William Jones, as one of her greatest linguists and scholars. This noble man was a reader and admirer of the Holy Scriptures, and probably pious from boyhood.

The name of Dr. Doddridge lives in his "Family Expositor," his admirable hymns, and other works;

but, most of all, in his "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." He began preaching at twenty or twenty-one, and was eminent in the pulpit. He too, like some that have been mentioned, seems to have begun life by a pious childhood. He was admitted publicly to the church at sixteen, but it is related of him that before thirteen he was distinguished alike for "piety and diligence."

Lady Huntingdon, whose name has become so well known to the Christian world by her friendship for Mr. Whitefield and her remarkable labors of holy benevolence, was thoughtful and prayerful, and lived under powerful impressions of religion from almost infantile age, though her piety, for want of proper instruction, seems not to have been matured until she arrived at adult age.

Her daughter, Lady Langham, was one of the most gifted and accomplished women of her own or any age; and her piety, which seems to have dated from quite juvenile years, was as marked as that of her mother. Her veneration for the sanctity of the sabbath was uncommon, and her mother made the remark of her that "she was the child who never offended her in all her life."

The name of Isaac Watts, the admirable Dr. Watts, illustrious, otherwise, through his preaching and writings, who of us does not cherish it, and what generation will not remember it, in its connexion with sacred lyrics? And the fact must be an interesting one to young persons, that the author of the Divine Songs for Children and of the Psalms and Hymns was himself pious, as well as remarkably

intelligent, at seven years of age, if not earlier, and composed most of his hymns when he was a young man.

President Edwards, the great metaphysician and preacher, was not only a prodigy of intellect but an example of most eminent spirituality. His piety may probably be dated as early as that of Dr. Watts, and was remarkable in its degree, even in his boyhood. A sister and a daughter of this great man, both of them ladies of high intelligence and Christian character, began their lives of godliness also with their childhood.

President Davies, whose preaching so charmed, impressed, and blessed the age in which he lived, and will continue through his written sermons to produce its effects in time yet to come, belongs also to our present interesting list; his religious character having been formed, as we have reason to believe, by his decided conversion when he was twelve years old.

President Dwight, the great divine and preacher, whose name, as well as that just given, will be remembered by my young readers in connexion with some of the sacred compositions of our hymn books, was probably another example; as also the Rev. Dr. John Rodgers of New York, who was one of the most eminent Christian ministers of his day.

Dr. Samuel Finley, whose name is held in veneration as a minister and teacher, and a promoter of some great schemes of philanthropy, seems to have belonged to the class of those whose Christian character was formed in childhood.

The same thing is true of Robert Hall, of England, so justly ranked among the most eminent pulpit orators of modern times. He commenced his preparation for the ministry at fifteen, and actually became a preacher while he was yet a very young man.

Very similar in all these points, was the case of Thos. Spencer, whose powers as a youthful preacher, during his brief career, so astonished and impressed those who heard him. He seems not only to have dedicated himself to God, but also to have desired the ministerial work, from childhood.

The late excellent Dr. Milne, missionary to China, also manifested remarkable piety and devotion while he was a very small boy.

The same early beginning we find in the case of the saintly Mrs. Isabella Graham. She was conscious of an intelligent dedication of herself to God at seven years of age.

Mrs. Mary Lundie Duncan, whose character presents so lovely a blending of intellectuality and spirituality, had a similar experience at the same age, and it is said of her, that "outward observers could not tell the time when she was not under the influence of religion."

Dr. Payson too, whose memoir, as well as that of Mrs. Graham, has been so much valued by Christian people, made a public profession of religion at seventeen, but it is not certain that he was not a subject of grace several years before.

The late venerated Dr. A. Alexander began his long life of spirituality and usefulness from about

the age of seventeen, as also Dr. Adam Clarke, the distinguished preacher and commentator.

Augustus Hermann Francke, so well known as the pious and benevolent founder of the Halle Orphan Asylum, had a sister who, we are informed, "to all appearance loved God from her infancy;" and this little sister, before her early death, exerted a happy influence on the religious character of that brother, who was afterwards to be so good and useful.

Another case of the same interesting character is that of the Duchess de Broglie, whose piety shone with such lustre of contrast, amid the follies and vices of the Parisian court. She said of herself, "I cannot recollect the time when I did not love God. From my earliest years, I took delight in reading the Scriptures and in committing myself to the Saviour."

C. F. Schwartz, the modern apostle of South-Western India, was dedicated to the missionary work by a pious mother on her death-bed; and from all that can be learned, it is probable that he was regenerated in his youth. He began his preparation for the missionary work while he was quite a young man in the University.

Dr. William Carey, so extraordinary from boyhood for his talents and self-gotten acquirements, but more honored in the memory of the Christian world as a pioneer missionary to India, was a child of grace from fourteen years of age; and his well known friend, the Rev. Samuel Pearce, from the age of sixteen.

The late Dr. J. Scudder affords another instance of early religion; as also the lamented W. M. Lowrie, missionary to China, who gave evidence of divine renewal at sixteen. Dr. S. was one of the most devoted and useful servants of God that has lived in our times. His memory will be cherished by the youth of our country for the efforts which he made to engage their hearts in behalf of the heathen. Not less than five of his own sons and two of his daughters are now engaged in the same missionary work, among the people of India, in which he died laboring successfully.

The mind of the gifted and devoted Mary Jane Graham was deeply affected by religious truth at a very early period of her life; and she manifested intelligent piety at seven years of age.

Those eminent missionary ladies, Harriet Newell and Harriet Winslow, each made a public profession at thirteen, but gave evidence of belonging to Christ's flock before that time.

The saving change was wrought in the heart of James B. Taylor when he was fifteen; and few have served the Master better in a brief career, or set a higher example of piety and zeal in college-life.

I will close this delightful compilation with the name and testimony of the late venerable William Jay, whose character as a preacher and a writer stands so high with the Christian public, and whose piety shed its mild radiance over years of unusual longevity. Said he, in one of his latter works: "Some of us can speak from experience. We were enabled early to dedicate ourselves to God: and,

next to the salvation of our souls, we daily praise him for an early conversion."

It will be noticed—and it is a fact to be studied—that in all the cases which have been cited, with the exception of one or two, the regenerate life began at an age not beyond seventeen—in many of them as early as twelve or thirteen; in some from the very first years of childhood.

Besides these well defined cases, there have been others in which, as in the instance of Augustus H. Francke and of Lady Huntingdon, a manhood or womanhood of holy character and influence were preceded by religious thoughtfulness and habits of devotion through the early part of life. This was true, even from infancy, of Oberlin, the admirable pastor of the Ban-de-la-Roche. It was true also of the excellent Halyburton of Scotland, whose "Great Concern" perpetuates his memory; of Brainerd, the holy, apostolic, and successful missionary; and to some extent also of Whitefield, the great evangelist of modern times, and Summerfield, whose powers as a young preacher produced such an impression in England and America, at a later day. These last two, it is true, were at times, in their early life, carried away into vice and wickedness, but they were also, at this period, the subjects of deep religious impressions and lively convictions of sin. The rest of those just mentioned may be said to have spent their childhood and youth, to a great extent, under the influence of religion; and in all these cases the great change was developed at from seventeen to twenty-one years. If we shall reckon, among the

examples of early piety, instances of conversion occurring within this period, along with those which date before it, the number of such examples would be vastly augmented; and we should arrive at the impressive result that few, very few, of those whom God honors and blesses in his service on earth, are of the number of those who are converted after they arrive at adult years.

And let every young reader remember, as his mind reverts to the instances that have been here adduced, how many of them were not only of early, but of very early devotion to God. Nor were these all that our research could have been made to yield. Our present rich collection might have been extended and adorned by the addition of other names illustrious in the annals of sanctity and beneficence.

Nor can there be any doubt that we could gather yet another harvest of illustrations, if we could ascertain how many of the most eminent servants of God now living—ministers, missionaries, and others —were youthful disciples of the Saviour. And then, how many of God's loveliest ones have died in their childhood or youth; how many have been gathered, while yet they were lambs, to the Master's fold in heaven. And if we could pursue the investigation, what a multitude of other such cases might be found among Christ's choicest people, who never attained a place in printed biography, but in their respective stations have shone or are shining now, in the beauty of surpassing holiness and usefulness, as stars of the church on earth.

What shall the record be, dear youth, of your life, of your early days, in the remembrances of time and the chronicles of eternity?

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Ps. ciii. 17).

"My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth" (Ps. xvi. 2, 3).

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14).

"Their works do follow them" (Rev. xiv. 13).

"Yet will I gather others to him besides those that are gathered" (Isa. lvi. 8).

"Blessed is the man in whose heart are the ways of them" (Ps. lxxxiv. 5).

"That thou mayest walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous" (Prov. ii. 20).

"I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. lxxxiv. 10.)

"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

What a noble cluster here too of names! Teachers, authors, ministers of Christ, missionaries, and other servants of God, holy men and women, whose record will last, in the remembrance of the good, and in the happy influence of their lives, through all the generations of time. Better, far better, as I

cannot but feel, for me to be what they were, in the character and ends of their living, than to wear the laurels of the world's conquerors and heroes, or wield the sceptre of empire, or revel in unsanctified ease and pleasure. Some of these names, from my earliest years, have been associated in my memory and imagination with the most beautiful images of human excellence: and whenever I think of them, the feeling rises in my own bosom, this picture is a pattern for me,—I ought to be like these saints of God. How plainly will this appear a thousand years hence?

And I cannot but mark the fact, so prominent in their history, of the early commencement of their holy service to God and their fellow-men. Nor can I resist the conviction that this was one great secret of their becoming what they were. Some of them lived a very short life, and would therefore have done nothing for God and the world had they not begun thus early. Had the case been different with them in this particular, then some stars, which have shed their light on this lower world, and now shine more resplendent in the glory of Christ's heavenly kingdom, would never have arisen. And what an evident fitness, what a beautiful symmetry, where the Christian course of later life has had its beginning in youth; the morning, the noon, the evening all alike; the path, from its beginning to its end, like the path of an angel's feet!

Shall I be such, in the measure of my abilities and opportunities, as were these admirable persons? Shall I begin as they did? Shall I begin in the

"days of my youth?" This, oh this, is the question which the contemplation of such cases forces upon me, and which, between the drawings of conscience and right feeling on the one hand and those of outward and inward evil influence on the other, my heart struggles and hesitates to decide.

God of my life! God of my youth! help me to determine it rightly and at once. And let the same grace, through Christ, avail for me which has been efficient to make some of the human family so illustrious in "the beauty of thine own purity and beneficence."

CHAPTER XIII.

EARLY PIETY IS PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

A GREAT and very dangerous abuse has been made of the eleventh hour parable, by applying the latter part of it which speaks of the ninth and eleventh hour classes, to persons who, after having heard the gospel all their lives, at last repent. This interpretation, taken in connexion with the conclusion of the parable, in which the laborers are all placed on the same footing of favor, would make the service of a mere remnant of life as acceptable to God as that of a whole lifetime, and the reward equally great. Nothing can be more false or more contrary to God's word. Any one who inspects the parable can see that the ninth and eleventh hour classes were designed to describe and to encourage persons of any age, class, or nation, and those only, who have not previously enjoyed such privileges, but repent as soon as they do hear the gospel call.*

* For some impressive and valuable remarks of Dr. Chalmers having allusion to this parable, the reader is referred to his Essay, published as an introduction to Baxter's Call (Am. Tract Society's Edition, Page 21).

The latter part of the parable, therefore, has no more application to aged persons than to others. A young Hindoo, or Chinaman, or African, or South Sea Island child, would have a right to apply it to himself which no aged sinner here could claim. Nothing, in fact, could be more monstrous than to suppose that the repentance and piety of old age or a dying hour can be as pleasing to our Maker as that of our healthful or our early life. Is the full-blown rose as sweet to you as the early bud with the dew of the morning fresh upon it? Would you be honored by any one who should offer you the dregs of a cup which he had first drained?

But we are at no loss to know what God thinks of the matter. The very command, "to remember our Creator in the days of our youth," shows how he regards youthful piety. Would He give the command and not be pleased with our obedience to it, rather than with gross and long-continued disobedience? Where, in all God's word, do you find such promises and invitations to the old, as it addresses to the young? Where does it say, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy *old age;* Take heed that ye despise not one of these *aged* ones, for in heaven *their* angels do always behold the face of my Father; Suffer the *old* to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; Out of the mouth of the *grey-headed* and *decrepit* hast thou perfected praise? True, we can offer nothing to God that will, in itself, be worthy of acceptance on the part of so great and holy a Being—nothing that will be free from the taint of sin; but if there is any earthly offering that can be

pleasing to him, it must be that of a young heart in the warmth of its early affections, breathing penitence for sin and desire after holiness.

Such an offering, O youthful reader, make haste to yield Him, while yet you have opportunity. The bud soon expands, to be a bud no more. Morning hours soon fly away. Youth will not last always. Your morning is fast verging to noon. Religion may indeed yet be yours, if you let the present period of your life pass without it, but youthful religion never. It may be yours, but you will never be able to say to your own heart, to God, to the companions of your bliss in heaven, that you sought and found him early! You may be renewed and saved—perhaps, as by fire, through the furnace of afflictions and chastisements—but the opportunity of honoring your Creator by remembering Him in the days of your youth will be gone for ever. In all your earthly life, in all your immortality, you will have your youth no more to give to Him who created you. Remember that if once it pass without being devoted to Him, you will then have been guilty of having utterly and for ever failed to obey your Maker's great injunction to you and all the young; and through all the remembrances of coming time and eternity, the morning of your life on earth will appear overshadowed by a cloud; and that will be the thought of this disobedience and of your youthful days wholly lost to God and the great ends of existence.

"To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel xv. 22).

"Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for

thyself long life; neither hast thou asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: Behold I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked" (1 Kings iii. 11–13).

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (Matt. xxi. 16).

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones" (Matt. xviii. 10).

"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6).

"Suffer the little children to come unto me" (Mark x. 14).

"Feed my lambs" (John xxi. 15).

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom" (Isaiah xl. 11).

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee" (1 Chron. xxviii. 9).

"So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man" (Prov. iii. 4).

"The child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with man" (1 Samuel ii. 26).

"I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth" (2 John 4).

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. viii. 13).

PRAYER.

O my Heavenly Father! is there anything that I can do, or that I can render, that will be pleasing to Thee? And shall I not perform it? Shall I strive to please my parents, my teachers, the

friends I venerate, and even my young companions? Do I find pleasure to myself in fulfilling their wishes and requests? And shall I not be ready to serve and please the infinitely great and good Being who made me?

"What a condescension for an angel's service to be accepted of Him? And will the great Jehovah deign to notice me? Will He be pleased with anything that I can do for Him?

I cull sweet flowers for the friends I love and honor—what have I to offer my parent of parents? Shall not the flowers of my life's morning and spring-time he offered to my God?

I owe myself to Thee. Ten thousand times more than I can give or do would be too little to offer One to whom so much is due. And wilt Thou accept the offering of a heart like mine, hitherto so dead to all that is good, and so defiled with sin? Thou hast said that an humble and contrite heart is the most acceptable sacrifice that man can yield to Thee. Give me such a heart while I am yet young; let me consecrate to Thee the dew of my early life; and let Thy pleasure henceforth and for ever be mine.

This I ask through Him, whose meat and drink it was to do Thy will, and whose atoning blood must sprinkle all our sacrifices.

CHAPTER XIV.

EARLY PIETY CONTRIBUTES TO THE HAPPINESS OF THE PRESENT LIFE, AND WILL PREPARE US FOR GREATER FELICITY IN THE LIFE TO COME.

TRUE piety yields high and noble pleasures, even in this world. Such will always be its effect, whether in your youth or in your later days. It is only because men mistake the real nature and sources of happiness that they can ever think otherwise.

Even if we could suppose anything different to be true, our duty would not be altered. If religion held out no rewards in this life,—if it were, as most persons seem to think, only a system of burdens and restraints,—it would nevertheless be incomparably better to submit ourselves to it, than to be without it, and run the risk of everlasting perdition.

But who can doubt, even if he has never had experience in the matter, that piety must have its pleasures, and pleasures as far superior to all that flow from unsanctified sources, as true religion itself is superior to anything merely earthly and temporal. If it is from God and heaven; and if it sets our hearts right, if it makes us like God Himself, then it must tend to make us happy, just in proportion to the degree in which we possess it.

Religion is love; and who does not know that the highest happiness of human minds is found in the exercise and exchange of affection? How loving and lovely then, and consequently how happy, would religion make all human beings, if all were imbued with it in a high degree!

It is this which creates the felicity of angels. They are happy because their hearts glow with pure and perfect love to God and all his creatures. And so, except for some distresses which we must feel for others, we shall be happy, even in this world, just in proportion as we are loving and good; and no true, solid pleasure can be enjoyed in a state of estrangement from God. The beautiful and costly instrument must be strung and tuned afresh by the hand of Him who made it, before it can ever give forth its sweetest music. The celebrated Elizabeth Fry, who afterwards found so much happiness in labors of pious usefulness, wrote, while she was living an early life of gaiety and brilliant worldliness: "I feel, by experience, how much entering into the world hurts me. Worldly company, I think, materially injures me: it excites a false stimulus, such as love of pomp, pride, vanity, jealousy, and ambition; it leads me to think about dress, and such trifles; and when out of it we fly to novels and scandal, or something of that kind for amusement and entertainment."

But, if you still have doubts on the subject, appeal to your pious friends. Ask your own dear father or mother, your teachers, or your young companions,—any of them that you think truly pious.

Do they not tell you—any, all of them—that their new spiritual life, and this only, has afforded them what they regard as the true happiness of their existence? Some of them have given you this testimony with their dying breath. One reason, indeed, why Christians sometimes do not seem to other persons to have much enjoyment in this life is, that having tasted something better, they have lost the relish for many of those things in which worldly people find some sort of gratification which is called pleasure. But another reason, it must be confessed, is, that besides those who may be Christians only in name, many of those who are truly such, possess piety in so low a degree as they do; having enough to create a distaste for the inferior pleasures of the world around them, and yet not enough to afford them high spiritual enjoyments. This is not the fault of religion itself. It is owing rather to a deficiency of it.

But if it has pleasures for you—pleasures far superior to those of a merely worldly kind, you certainly will have longer experience of them, by beginning a life of godliness while you are young. And you will have a higher enjoyment of them too, as long as you live, for having so done. It is not to be expected that God will bestow the smiles of His favor on those who, having spent the greater part of their days in folly and sin, give Him grudgingly some of the last, as He does on those who devote to Him their earliest and best. "It is those who have made the earliest sowing that, in the autumn of life, will reap the most of the golden ears."

And every one knows that we enjoy all pleasant things with a higher zest while we are young, and our feelings are warm and lively. There can be no doubt that young Christians have higher religious enjoyments than other persons of equal piety, for the reason that their spiritual pleasures mingle with the warmly gushing feelings, the lively imaginations, the sanguine hopes of the youthful mind.

Not the autumn, not even the summer, can garnish the earth with flowers and verdure as the spring can do; and religion, instead of being, in respect to its influence on our happiness, unsuitable to our early life, finds its best adaptation in the juvenile mind and character. Would you think the pleasures of a bright day, a walk, a visit, marred by the presence of your parents or of some friend whom you love and venerate? That friend might indeed sometimes check you and sometimes whisper a gentle suggestion, but would you regard this as interfering with the enjoyments of the hour? Would not such society rather contribute to its real pleasures, and would you not congratulate yourself upon having the presence of a counsellor, who would not only warn you of what might prove injurious, but point out new objects of entertainment, and share your pleasures with you? And who would not feel that a day or hour thus spent, in innocent and well regulated enjoyment, is worth far more than one given up to giddy and unrestrained recreation?

The world is under a great mistake on this point, and young people themselves are apt to be deeply infected with the error. The service of God is not,

as seems to be generally supposed or felt by the irreligious world, a service which imposes severe and arbitrary restraints, taking away our liberty, and crossing without reason our natural desires after happiness. If this were true, then you might, indeed, have some cause to shun it if you safely could, and sport away the sunshine of life's early hour. But, dear young reader, you must yourself see that this cannot be so. It is a reflection on our blessed Creator to suppose that it can be. Such a sentiment is nothing but the doctrine of Satan, the heresy which desolated Paradise and ruined the world; for the Tempter preached to our parents that they would find enjoyment in disobeying their Maker.

The will of God and our best interests are coincident; duty and true happiness always go together. Men, in their sinful hearts, deny this, and disbelieve the pleasures of piety; because they never have had, and while they remain in their natural, depraved state, cannot have any experience of them. They cannot understand them, any more than a man blind from birth can understand the beauty of colors, or a man always deaf appreciate the charms of music. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Does religion interfere with you in any of your desires or pursuits? If so, it is only to save you from evil, and direct you to what is good; to correct your errors and purify your heart, to take you by the hand and lead you safely, steadily, happily through youth and through life. And is it nothing, is it not

worth more than all the sickly and transient "pleasures of sin," to be able to look up at all times to the infinite God as our Father, and to heaven as our home?

A great deal of our happiness, moreover, consists in pleasant recollections. How much less of repentance, humiliation, and sad reflection will overcast the thoughts of later years, if you begin your life with God, by an early devotion of yourself to Him. And how sweet the memory of a youth spent in the ways of piety. There is no one who has ever had experience of it but would declare that it is worth ten thousand times more than all the pleasures of a worldly life. What a satisfaction is there in the recollection of duty done and time rightly spent. This, if you devote your youth to God, you will have through all your years to come, even should you live to hoary hairs. Piety in the heart, instead of destroying, will heighten your proper enjoyments. It will sweeten your true pleasures, and brighten your brightest hours as they pass. And all the pleasures which it yields you now, you will enjoy anew whenever your mind reverts to them. Sinful gratifications leave a sting behind them, and that sting we feel as often as we renew the memory of them, if it be a thousand times. Even those which are innocent, where they are enjoyed without religion, leave little behind them but regrets that they are gone. The mind is still hollow and craving. But not so with religion. It not only holds up a lamp to shine on the path before us, as it leads us onward and upward, but illumines and

beautifies to our eyes the track behind us also. Our holy pleasures fill and satisfy the mind while they last, and it can derive new enjoyment from every remembrance of them. They are like the manna in the wilderness, or the loaves in Christ's hands, which failed not, however much consumed; like angel's food which can be fed upon, with fresh delight for ever!

If your days on earth are to be long, how cheering in the toils and struggles of middle life, and in the solitary path of old age, to be able to remember that the journey was begun under Heavenly guidance and favor. And if you die early, how great, beyond all price, the satisfaction of knowing then that if your "youth" was all you had to spend on earth, you did "remember Him," and spend it all for Him. How many, in life's later years, or on a death-bed, have lamented their not having given their hearts early to God! When Patrick Henry was near the close of his life, he laid his hand on the Bible, and addressing a friend who was with him, said, "Here is a book worth more than all others printed, yet it is my misfortune never to have read it with proper attention until lately." How many have had such regrets! But who has ever heard of any one expressing sorrow either in his dying hour, or at any other time, that he had lived, from his youth, a life of godliness? Theodore Beza, in his last will and testament, thus expressed himself: "I bless thee, O God, for many things, but especially that I gave up myself to thee at the early age of sixteen." Philip Henry, at the age of forty-five, commenting

on the text, "My yoke is easy," &c., made the declaration: "I have been drawing, in a poor measure, for thirty years; I have found it an easy yoke, and love my choice too well to change." And it was the dying testimony of Matthew Henry, that "a life spent in the service of God, and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in this world." The words of Mr. Jay have been given in a preceding chapter; and the experience of these great and good men, on this point, is that of all who have been, like them, early travellers in the path of piety.

Nor can there be any doubt that the felicity and glory of heaven itself, through all eternity, will be greater to you for having thus remembered Him, and thus spent your youthful days; not only because we shall have a perfect memory there of our life in this world, but because God will most richly endow, with the capacity and the fruition of its blessedness, those who have longest and best served Him here below. "Give to him that hath ten pounds." Seek therefore at once the Saviour's love and your Heavenly Father's favor. Let the influences of heaven and holiness mingle with all your thoughts, your feelings, your purposes; and then you will have a rich experience of heaven-born pleasures, such as no after-conversion will ever bring you.

"Great peace have they which love thy law" (Ps. cxix. 165).

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy

lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. xxxiv. 12–14).

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. xi. 26).

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Is. lv. 2).

"The gold and the crystal cannot equal it [wisdom]: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold" (Job xxviii. 17).

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. vi. 6).

"Her [wisdom's] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. iii. 17).

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. iii. 17, 18).

PRAYER.

O Thou from whom all good flows to all creatures, Thou hast formed me for Thyself, and I cannot but believe that, under Thy protection and guidance, enjoying Thy communion and love, fulfilling Thy service, the most perfect and blessed state of intelligent and immortal creatures like myself must ever be found. This Thy own word declares, and my godly friends testify their experience of its truth.

Thou art the "fountain," the infinite and ever-flowing fountain of true peace and happiness. All

that I enjoy here on earth, all my capacities of enjoyment, come from Thee; how excellent, how glorious must be the source from which all that is lovely and good in creation flows! And where is an immortal mind to find what will fill its vast desires, but in Thee? All beside this—all that the world and Satan and a fallen nature would promise me—all that I would find in estrangement from Thee, must be "broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Let me know, O my Father in heaven, the blessedness of these who enjoy Thy favor.

"For, O thou gracious Giver of all good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts thyself the crown;
Give what Thou wilt, without Thee I am poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

I hope to enjoy Thy love as my chief felicity in the world of glory. Thy smile illumines heaven, and kindles the joy of angels; let that smile, for my Redeemer's sake, ever be upon me, and then, whatever may come, I shall be blest in life, in death, and through all eternity.

CHAPTER XV.

EARLY PIETY IS THE ONLY MEANS OF SECURITY AGAINST THE FEARFUL LIABILITY OF A HOPELESS EARLY DEATH.

Facts to which I have before pointed you, show that it is very doubtful whether your salvation will ever be secured, if not now. And if you should live on to the end of your course in an irreligious state, then continued life—the life on which you place so many fond hopes—instead of proving a blessing will be a curse.

But you may be cut down, cut down in the very flower of early years. You may never live to become a man or a woman. "The days of your youth" may be the only time that you ever will have to serve God and prepare for eternity. The whole of your existence, if you reached Methusaleh's age, would be little enough for so great a concern. There is not a moment to be spared from it of the longest life. What folly, what monstrous madness are men guilty of in putting it off to a sick-bed and the last hour. The great business of life—for which even four-score years would seem too short—crowded into a few of its last moments, when, even if we have reason and the power of thought, we are

almost wholly unfit for doing anything, much less that which demands the highest exertion of the intellect and the mightiest effort of the soul. "An age," said the dying Altamont, "were too little for the much I have to do."

Even if you might hope by possibility to repent and obtain pardon in your last hours, it would only be to mourn over the whole of your earthly existence as wasted. When William Pitt, the great statesman of England, after a career of the highest human glory, came to die, he said: "I fear that I have, like many others, neglected my religious duties too much to have any ground to hope that they can be efficacious on my death-bed."

What doubt, what fear hang over a dying-bed repentance! Indeed, it is almost a contradiction to speak of such a thing. What is a forced repentance worth? Is it repentance at all? The penitence of the sick-bed or of the hour of danger is hardly ever anything else than the mere excitement of alarm, and is no better than that of the criminal, who trembles because punishment is about to fall upon him, and not because he is really sorry for his crimes, and who would perpetrate the same deed for which he is to be punished, if he were tempted again. How many have you ever known of those who seemed to be penitent in the hour of extreme illness, or of some great peril, and yet escaped death, that afterwards showed the signs of true conversion?

And would you hang your salvation on so forlorn and desperate a hope as that of life's last hurried,

trembling, agonized hours? And where do you find the encouragement to believe that God will show you mercy and grant you a passport to heaven in those closing hours? Read, I beg you, Proverbs i. 24–32, and Luke xii. 40, and you will see that He warns you of the very contrary.

What presumption, to reckon upon any future opportunities for repentance—even those of a sick-bed. You do not reject religion, you say; you only put it off "to a more convenient season." But in whose hands is your breath? To whom belongs the morrow? To whom but Him whom you are neglecting, against whose authority you are rebelling, every hour you live? What daring impiety, as well as folly, in these hopes of yours!

A dread uncertainty hangs over that future on which you so much count. Alas! it will disappoint you, if it does come, of many fond expectations. How great a majority of men die, regretting the failure of more than half the hopes of early life! There is nothing more perfidious than that "deceitful heart" (Jer. xvii. 9) which you carry in your own bosom; no greater liar and cheat than he who beguiled our first parents with promises of knowledge and life, while he was plotting their destruction, and who even dared to tempt our Lord with the promise of "all the kingdoms of this earth;" no greater scene of dreams and illusions than that of the false world which entices your young and too yielding nature. If it should give you all it promises, or ever can give, of outward good, you will have to say, at last, with the great monarch, "all is vanity [empti-

ness, unsatisfactoriness] and vexation of spirit." And then, oh, then, to think of losing heaven into the bargain, losing it without gaining what you expected and what you sacrificed it for!

But that uncertainty, that terrible uncertainty, that overshades every hour of your coming days—the uncertainty of life itself! Will you hazard your everlasting all upon a thing so dubious? Are you willing to live with a sword like that which hung over the head of Damocles, everywhere and every moment suspended over you? Do you need proof of this doubt and hazard? Look around you—look back. See how many of your young companions are fallen; how many graves, not of your older friends only, but of your youngest, line every step of the dangerous path along which you are treading. The next on the wayside may be yours, and you will then, if still unchanged, die a death of youthful impiety and lie in a hopeless grave. Your dying day will then be the darkest in the black catalogue of "evil days" which you may be called to pass through, without God and religion. It will be, with dreadful emphasis, "the evil day!"

You can, perhaps, call to mind some of your early companions who died in the midst of a youth in which they had "remembered their Creator." As you stand by their graves, and through your tears read their loved names on the tombstone, joy mingles with your sorrow for them; the very sod seems to grow greener, the trees to wave a more beautiful foliage, the birds to carol a sweeter song over that spot, and you feel that it is a place filled with the

melodies and odors of heaven! How pleasant the memory of a pious child, a pious youth, taken to heaven!

But, oh, how different with some others that have gone! You have perhaps stood by the last bed of some who died in early impenitency and hopelessness; and if it was not your feeling, it was that of their more pious or thoughtful friends, while they wept tears of anguish for them, that a world would be too little to give if they could but be able to know that the departing one was of the number of those who had "remembered their Creator." But no! youth, life, was fled, and fled for ever!

And so it may be with you. God's displeasure against you is increasing every day that you live, if you are living in unmindfulness of Him. If you despise His tender and condescending call to "remember" Him, then you may call on Him when "the evil days" of old age, or sorrow, or sickness, or death shall "come," but call in vain. On a dying bed you may lift up your cry to Him too late, while you have just time to remember and bewail your youth lost to God and heaven. Then how awfully will the thought haunt your soul, that in your heart you forgot your Creator "in the days of your youth." You too, like some that you have known, may be cut down both early and suddenly, "the silver cord" be snapped, "the golden bowl broken" to fragments, in some unlooked for moment, and your young companions, your fond parents, gaze on you, before the glow of youth and health has had time to fade from your cheek, turned into a corpse

and folded in a winding sheet. But, oh, it will not be because they see your eyes set in death, your limbs turned to cold marble, that they will weep most. Bitter, scalding tears, wrung from breaking hearts, will flow for you, because every remembrance of you will bring up to them the thought of a youth misspent, a hopeless death-bed, a spirit lost, and lost for ever. Think not that your being born of godly parents will insure your salvation. Instances to the contrary occur in the Bible itself. Aaron and David had to mourn for sons hopelessly cut off (see Numb. xvi. and 2 Sam. xviii. 33).

Pious relatives and friends may indeed first be taken away; and it is remarkable how they are sometimes removed "from the evil to come." But if they do survive to see you thus die, it will be to mourn you with a sorrow too deep for any pen to describe. What grief can ever compare with that of losing a friend in impenitency? Yet, terrible as their affliction may be, the worst of the case will not be to those sorrow-stricken survivors. They may, it is true, lament you through all their remaining life; they may even die broken-hearted; but this to them will be all. Their sorrows will soon have an end;—will end for ever—will end in heaven!

But yours—everlasting weeping, endless despair, tears never to be wiped away, sorrows, not like theirs, but mingled with and aggravated ten-fold by self-crimination and remorse! How can you endure the thought of such a fate? How for a moment bear to be in such peril? How live a day without the assurance of pardoned sin, and destitute of a

hope of heaven? Make sure, at once, that such an end be not yours. Your Heavenly Father grants you continued life, health, youth, purposely that you may seek His grace and obtain salvation.

Think, therefore, think betimes, of your duty to your Creator, of the great end for which he made you, of your sins against Him. Seek reconciliation with Him, through that Saviour who encouraged even "little children" to come to Him. Give yourself up to His will and service, and do it without delay. Then you will have nothing to dread in death. It will come to you—let it come whenever and however it may—not as the king of terrors, but as a sweet angel messenger, to bid you to a Father's home and a Saviour's bosom in the skies.

"There is but a step between me and death" (1 Sam. xx. 3).

"All are of the dust, and turn to dust again" (Eccl. iii. 20).

"Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets" (Eccl. xii. 5).

"In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matt. xxiv. 44).

"Know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. xi. 9).

"Where the tree falleth there it shall be" (Eccl. xi. 3).

"Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Eccl. ix. 3).

"He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

"And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me" (Prov. v. 11–13).

"Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his" (Num. xxiii. 10).

"O my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son" (2 Sam. xviii. 33).

MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

Death early, sudden! And is it true, is it even possible, that this may be my fate? In the very midst of youth? In a day, a night, an hour, nay, perchance an instant? How the heart recoils at the thought! But can I boast any security of life not possessed by others who have been stricken down from my very side, almost as suddenly as if by a flash from the thunder cloud; the rose scarce fading from the young cheek, the light from the beaming eye, before it was said "He is dead," "She is gone!"

Does not death, in fact, make his most sudden and rapid onsets where the young are his prey? Does not every one know that the very flush and fire of youthful life give swifter wings to disease and accident?

My young companions, some of them, almost before I knew it, gone, buried, the jaws of the grave closed for ever upon them! The flower nipped in its early bud—night coming before the noon of life! Did not some of them, with their own last breath, call upon me to beware? Can I ever forget those tones of voice, those silent looks of dying eyes, that seemed to penetrate my very soul? Messages of warning those were from the very gate of the eternal

world. And did not a cold shiver of fear pass over me, as I marked death's work upon them, and thought within myself that so it might be with me?

So it may indeed be. Their history may be mine; and mine, like theirs, a grave where the turf will be growing, before it would seem that it was time for me to die.

O Thou who hast given me my being! let me not be taken away suddenly in my youthful sins. Let me turn to Thee while life, and health, and opportunities are continued to me. Let me not, by my persistence in neglect and disobedience, weary Thy patience, and provoke Thee to cut me down in Thy wrath and cast me off for ever. Let me through Thy grace, granted me for Jesus' sake, so live that death, to my thoughts, shall lose its terrors. "Let me die the death" of some whom I have known and loved, and who had thus lived. "Let my last end," O God! whether it come sooner or later, whether it come suddenly or with warning, "be like theirs."

PARTING WORDS.

And now, dear young friend and reader, my work for you is finished. It has been by no means an unpleasing task. On the contrary, the thought of its being made the means of drawing some young heart to the Creator's love and service has been most cheering, in all the labor.

Yet, though I have felt a deep interest in the subject, I am obliged to confess that my warmest

thoughts have been too cold and feeble, in view of what its intrinsic importance and interest seemed to demand. An angel's mind, an angel's pen could hardly set it strongly enough before you. May a higher than an angel's power impress it on your heart!

One thing, nevertheless, I know, and that is, that what I have addressed to you, however imperfectly, ought to convince you and lead you to immediate action. An array of motives more complete could never be brought forward to prove anything. They are not of my devising. They have their existence in truth and fact more real and momentous than words can adequately convey. They are just what God's word in general, His special message to you, and the common understanding of every person would furnish. They stand before you upheld by every dictate of your own reason and every impulse of true self-interest; armed with the authority of your Maker; surrounded by every sanction of a final judgment, heaven, hell, eternity. You cannot yourself refute or deny a single one of them. Indeed you will hardly attempt it or think of it. I doubt whether one of them will ever be controverted or questioned by anybody that reads this book. Will you then go against them all? Will you set aside everything that your own understanding declares to be true and good?

If God Himself has pointed out to you the time from which your duty and services to Him are to begin; if He has the highest possible claims on

you and right in you; if He has laid upon you His most solemn and peremptory command; if you are living in continual and accumulating guilt every hour that you live in unmindfulness and neglect of Him; and if, at the same time, the fitness of early life for learning all that is good, the more favoring nature of outward circumstances at that period, the very necessities of your preparation for future duties and trials, the far greater ability of being good and useful through coming life, the proof of this afforded in the lives of so many of God's most eminent servants, the assurance of doing what will be peculiarly pleasing to Him who made you, and of adding to your own happiness in time and eternity, with the peril of an early and hopeless death, all combine to point out to you the same course;—then can you doubt, for a moment, what you ought to do? One course, and but one, is plain before your eyes. All of duty, all of safety and good are in it. Ten thousand voices, that ought to reach your inmost spirit, call you to pursue it, and that without delay.

If ever there were reasons enough for human conduct, they are here. You act in no other case whatever with motives more powerful,—nay, with motives a half, a tenth, a hundredth part so strong. Arguments far less plain and conclusive would move you in any matter, where some opposing influence of transient interest or gratification did not obstruct. Such opposing influences are just what are operating in your case. There is not one proper argument or reason to put in the scale against the

weighty considerations that have been presented. All the better sentiments of your nature speak in their favor. It is only your depraved inclinations that do or can resist them.

How could any one withstand them for a moment, if there were not something wrong in him? If you can do so any longer, it shows that you are strongly bound to sin and Satan,—far more strongly than you have ever yourself imagined; and that you ought to be greatly alarmed at your present condition.

Have you not already received many messages from God? Have you not, though young, both heard and resisted many calls not only of His word but of His Providence? Pious friends have warned you,—some of them, it may be, on a dying bed and with their last breath. Perhaps it was in the last accents and with the last embraces, the last loving, beseeching looks, of a venerated father or a tender mother, at whose knee you first learned God's name, but whose form is now hidden, whose voice hushed, in the grave. Could ever a call more solemn, more touching reach you, this side of your own death-bed? Ah, that parent, that pious friend, will never come back here to repeat those warnings. But what they said will not be buried in their graves. It will be remembered, to your everlasting joy or sorrow, at the judgment:

> "Those silent lips shall wake and yet proclaim
> A dread amen to truths they uttered here!"

Perhaps you have yourself been arrested by sick-

ness; death, it may be, has stared you in the very face. If so, what promises, what vows did you then make? Have you fulfilled them? You have stood, perhaps, and heard the last groans and cries of some godless companion, who, in awful words, bade you beware of his fate; or, what was almost as fearful, seen him pass out of life in the unconsciousness of delirium, without a word of warning or a thought of dying.

These things at times moved you and even made you tremble. You have been "almost persuaded." Yet you have postponed, resisted, grieved the Spirit.

How near, how very "near to the kingdom" do young persons sometimes come; at times so near that it seems as if one step further would bring them in!

Are you thus lingering about the threshold of a Christian faith and profession,—your judgment, your conscience, your best feelings, your pious education, the example and persuasions of many that you must love and revere, all drawing you towards it, and some, it may be, of your own loved young companions already numbered among Christ's followers, and beckoning you to come in and join their company. Take that final step. Enter in, and be blessed for ever. Oh, enter, dear youth! while now the gate is open just before you.

You have enjoyed many opportunities and advantages, especially if educated in a pious family. What a vast amount of instruction and privilege do young persons so situated often enjoy, in the course

of all the years they spend under the paternal roof? And oh! it is a solemn and alarming thought, that your very reading of the Bible, your Sabbath-school duties, the prayers and instructions of the family, the sermons you hear, the tracts and good books you read, the exhortations of Christian friends, and all the means of spiritual good which you enjoy—if you do not, with God's promised help, improve them to your salvation—will but aggravate your condemnation and final ruin. Better far would it be to die a heathen child or a heathen adult, than to die an unconverted child of a Christian family or a Christian country.

Nor can you resist these means and influences which draw you towards God, without hardening your heart and getting farther from Him. Mrs. Fry, while she was yet pursuing a career of brilliant worldliness, said of herself: "I am like one setting out on a journey; if I set out on the wrong road and do not try to recover the right one before I have gone too far, I shall be very likely to lose my way for ever, and every step I take the more difficult shall I find it to return. Therefore the temptation will be the greater to go on till I get to destruction. On the contrary, if now I turn into the right path, I shall feel more and more contented every step I take."

But may I hope something more favorable of you than what has been suggested? Do some of those better thoughts and feelings of which I have spoken still linger with you? Have any such been awakened, or awakened anew, in the reading of these

pages? Cherish them, oh, cherish them as your life. Let them not leave you, lest they leave you for ever. Remember the case to which I have before referred, of the young man who came to Jesus, conversed with Him, publicly manifested a desire of salvation, and in so unusual a degree drew the Saviour's heart to him, but, after all, turned his back on Christ, went away in his sins, and probably never was saved. You may be nearer, now, yourself, to that Saviour and to heaven than you will ever be again, even should you live to fourscore.

Do you say that you feel but little inclination to thoughts of God and religion? You may never have any greater than you now have. The longer you live as you are now doing, the less you will probably desire the great and needful change.

To continue in the neglect of God is the very way to harden your heart towards Him. The religious thoughts and feelings of your early life may pass from you, as, alas! I have sometimes seen the case, like the mists and dews of the morning, and pass away never to return. Oh, cling to any that you have, as you would cling to existence itself! They are as the life of your soul. Cultivate them by all the means in your power; avoid everything that would repress them; do not be ashamed to make them known to godly friends who may aid you by their counsels and prayers, and would delight to do so; but, most of all, seek the help of God Himself, in following whither these better thoughts and feelings would lead you. Have you, at any former period, had convictions of duty and

inclinations towards religion, that have now left you? Try to recall them. Pray that they may return to you. Those impressions—those God-ward and heaven-ward desires of a young heart—oh, they may be worth more to you than a thousand worlds! Resolve that you will cherish them and follow them till your youthful sins are pardoned through Christ, your youthful but depraved nature renewed, and a heart be given you to remember in youthful love, gratitude, penitence, and faith, the God who made you. Call upon Him, through that Saviour who manifested such peculiar condescension and affection towards the young, to carry on the work which perhaps His Spirit is already beginning in your heart. If you do this sincerely and earnestly, your prayers will be heard.

He remembers with special grace those who in youth remember Him, to seek and serve Him. Doing this, you will yourself, in future years, think of the choice of your early days, and the remembrance will bring no pang with it. The very memory of it will be worth more, a thousand times more, than all the gratifications for which you are now tempted to forsake your God.

Beginning thus with His protection, guidance, smile, and favor, its morning will merge into a calm and bright noon, and then, if old age come on, into a sweet and serene evening. When sorrows come, they will but make you feel in a higher degree the value of a Christian's faith and hope, and rejoice the more in your early acquisition of them. And if your life should be soon and suddenly cut short,

you will not only be able to meet death without fear, but will then have the happiness of knowing that the few days you spent on earth were all given to God. How such a thought will brighten a dying hour, how sweetly mingle even with the joys of heaven!

A vain world, the Tempter, your own evil heart say, "some future time," "a little older." But God commands you, "now," "now,"—"remember me now." You cannot disobey Him without guilt; you disobey Him at your utmost peril. He has seen the necessities of your case, and takes as it were special pains to warn you and call you to Himself, while you are young. This He does, as I have before reminded you, because He sees both how wicked it is towards Himself and how injurious and dangerous to you, to live away, as you are now doing, the first and best part of your life on earth. If you neglect your duty to Him, and despise His calls, so specially and kindly made to you and all the young, He may withdraw all the gracious and saving influences of His Spirit, and abandon you to hardness of heart and final impenitency.

As it is, you are getting further and further away from Him every day; and who can tell how far any one may go, if the protection and care of his Creator be withdrawn from him? And not only is there such danger of your going to fearful lengths in iniquity, if thus abandoned of Him, but every step that you do take in the downward path will, in that case, be a step never to be retraced.

I have already adverted to the uncertainty of life,

the risks of your present condition, the fearfulness of death where it comes unexpected and unprepared for. Let me ask you, before we part as writer and reader, what can ever repay you—I will not say for the loss of your soul—but even for the risks, the tremendous risks which you are running? Every day that you live in your present state you imperil more and more your everlasting all. Every step you take in life conveys you further in that road which leads down to death. Flowers of bright hue may indeed bloom there, but deadly adders lurk beneath them; the air may seem to be nothing but sunshine and sweet odors, but the poison of death is in its every breath; the way seems smooth and inviting, and you see it crowded with merry and brilliant throngs; but fiery clouds of Heaven's wrath impend, and pit-falls open at every step. Have you not, oh, have you not, with your own eyes, seen the young, the gay, the thoughtless, fall there, to rise no more? How can you venture further in such a path of peril, especially when you know that once to fall there is to be lost for ever!

Oh, to think that one of those who read these lines should thus perish! Shall it be so with any? Shall it be so with you? Shall it be written on your soul's tombstone, in the great graveyard of doomed spirits, "He died impenitent and accursed," "He died a lost youth?"

What a dreadful thing to die, though young, yet enlightened as you are in regard to your duty, and from the midst of such opportunities of salvation! Oh, to be so near to the Saviour as almost to touch

the hem of His garment; to be so near to Heaven's gate, that its melodies seemed to sound in your ears, and its glory to beam forth in your face, and yet be lost! How can you bear the peril of it?

All that you have ever learned of God, your duty and salvation, from the time that you began to say an infant's prayer, or to study your Bible, will, in such a case, but make your guilt and condemnation the worse. Your very knowledge, instead of being, as it ought, the means of your salvation, "will then prove a magazine of arms for conscience to use" against you in a dying hour and through eternity. The reading of this very volume, sad thought! may but aggravate your doom, and add fuel to the undying remorse of a lost spirit. But may I not hope that among those who shall peruse it, there will be found some that can claim to have already fulfilled the precept of the divine message to the young, by "remembering" Him "in the days of their youth?" If this be your case, I most heartily and joyfully congratulate you. Happy, thrice happy are you in having yielded thus early obedience to your Maker's call. You have chosen, and chosen betimes, that "good part which shall never be taken from you." Never, never will you repent of that choice. Sweet memories will entwine around it and embower it more and more, as long as you live on earth, in your last departing hour, and through all the immortality of your life in heaven!

I have said how sad it is to think that one of my readers may be lost. But how comforting and delightful if what I have here written shall be the

means of leading even one of those for whose benefit this book was designed, to give a youthful heart and a youthful life to God. I shall meet you, young disciple of Jesus, and child of God!—I shall meet you soon on those celestial shores, where youth shall be immortal, and where our whole nature shall feel the most intense delight in "remembering," loving, serving, glorifying our great Creator.

But I cannot forget that I am to meet all my young readers at the dread tribunal of a world's final day. In the last words, therefore, of a writer to a reader, who are there to meet each other, and each to render his account;—as one who trusts that he has some experience, though much less than he ought to have had, of the unspeakable value of early religion, and who has heard the dying testimony of some of his own youthful companions, both Christian and unconverted,—the former rejoicing in the choice which they had made, the latter lamenting theirs in grief and shame, when it was too late,—I beseech you to heed the heavenly call conveyed to you in those beautiful and interesting words, that ought to be so especially beautiful and interesting to every young person—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34).

"Wilt thou not from this time, cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth" (Jer. iii. 4).

"Your Heavenly Father [shall] give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 13).

"Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 42).

"My son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." (To Solomon himself by his royal father.) (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.)

"Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. iii. 9).

"That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke xii 47, 48).

"Because I have called and ye refused; * * * * * I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord" (Prov. i. 24–29).

"Woe also to them when I depart from them" (Hosea ix. 12).

"Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always" (Deut. v. 29).

"Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end" (Deut. xxxii. 29).

"A time accepted—the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

"To-day" (Ps. xcv. 7, and Heb. iv. 7).

RESPONSE AND PRAYER OF A YOUNG READER YIELDING TO THE FORCE OF THE VIEWS THAT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED.

I HAVE now done. I have heard all that the writer has had to address to me. How important, if true! And is it not true—wholly true? Can I challenge

the correctness of any part of what has been said? These arguments, each in itself how entirely unanswerable and conclusive, how powerful in its truth, how sufficient to persuade me, and all of them together forming a chain of iron strength and golden brightness, which not even an angel's power could break.

A book full of persuasions to youthful religion, and every one of them just and important in the highest degree. The truth shines clear as sunlight from every page. It is the truth of God. My understanding assents entirely to the force of these considerations. Conscience is wholly on their side. The best feelings of my nature, in soft and gentle voices, speak all in their favor. And even self-interest whispers, in low but startling tones, of the balances against me and the awful risks. And all the arguments in the case are on one side. Not a counterbalancing argument or reason to be opposed to them—not one. What mighty power constrains me that I should go against them all? It is my own unholy nature that holds me back. It is because there is something that I love better than I love God and my duty, that I refuse obedience. And is it not most dangerous to yield to such an influence as that which now enslaves me, an influence which wholly prevents me from being what I ought to be, and puts my salvation in constant peril?

How, in view of all that is here addressed to me, ought I most clearly to live in time to come? How foolish and wicked to have spent all the days of my

youth, thus far, as I have done. And how can I permit myself to live so any longer? All that I can now do is for the future. I cannot give to God that part of my early life which is past. Alas, it is gone for ever! I cannot now think of it as anything but wasted and worse than wasted. Let me hasten to seek the heavenly aid which will enable me to give my great Creator the place in my mind and heart that belongs to Him, and to spend for Him my remaining youthful days. They will soon fleet away. They may end sooner and more suddenly than I am prone to expect. And if the gay fancies and bright dreams of youth should all at once turn to the shadows of death, what would become of me? It has sometimes almost made me tremble to repeat that line of the little going-to-bed hymn of my childhood:

"If I should die before I wake."—

What if I should some night? It is just what has happened to some of my companions who set out with a fair prospect of living as long as I, and whose graves I already see along the short path I have trodden in life.

And if I live to grow up without religion, I shall perhaps live only to become hardened in worldliness and sin, and at last die with greater guilt and condemnation upon my head.

I have already often put aside the claims of God, when pressed upon me. I have resisted many calls to "remember Him." My God and Father, give

me the grace to exercise this holy and dutiful remembrance of Thee while it is "now" with me, and before the "evil days" come on, in which I shall find myself struggling to do, and vainly regretting that I had not sooner done, the first work of life; or in a dying hour find myself utterly and for ever undone.

O Thou who hast so graciously condescended to the young, and whom I have heretofore so much forgotten and banished from my heart, let me not turn a heedless ear to this new call of thine, given me through the book that I have just been reading. Let not all the arguments and motives here presented be lost upon me. Let nothing keep me longer away from Thee, and out of the path where my highest duty and safety lie. Let the power which the world, and Satan, and my evil nature have had over me be now broken, and for ever. Let me "be willing in the day of Thy power." Henceforth let me be Thy child. Let all my days, whether comparatively few or many, be spent for Thee; and whether life end in youth, or middle age, or with hoary hairs, oh, then, my great and blessed Creator! in Thy love and mercy, for Christ's sake, remember Thy unworthy creature and servant, whose prayer is now offered before Thee, and who would obey the voice of Thy message to him by remembering Thee now in the days of his youth.

SEQUEL.

CONTAINING SOLILOQUIES, REFLECTIONS, ETC., DESIGNED TO ENFORCE THE VIEWS PRESENTED IN THE PRECEDING PAGES.

Let not the reader regard the following sketches as mere productions of fancy. They are not, indeed, historical; neither were the parables of our Saviour. Yet were not these parables infallibly truthful representations of what is everywhere occurring, or liable to occur, in the religious history of men? They are only general descriptions personified, or represented as if acted out in some individual case.

So with the soliloquies here given. They embody and personify, each of them, as if in a single example and in the utterance of the person, what is actually taking place around daily, in multitudes of cases. Any one of them, young reader, may become your own.

Some of them are in a great measure filled out from actual instances, which stand, like beautiful or terrific pictures, in my own memory; and many a minister and Christian who looks over them will remember cases, within his own observation, that

were the full counterpart of those most strongly drawn.

Which of them, dear youth, shall be your experience, of blessing or cursing, of glory or despair?

"When youth complained,
The ancient sinner shook his hoary head,
As if he meant to say, stop till you come
My length, and then you may have cause to sigh.
At twenty, cried the boy, who now had seen
Some blemish in his joys: How happily
Plays yonder child that busks the mimic babe,
And gathers gentle flowers, and never sighs.
At forty, in the fervor of pursuit,
Far on in disappointment's dreary vale,
The grave and sage-like man looked back upon
The stripling of plump and unseared hope,
Who galloped gay and briskly up behind,—
And, moaning, wished himself eighteen again.
And he of threescore years and ten, in whose
Chilled age, fatigued with gaping after hope,
Earth's freshest verdure seemed but blasted leaves,
Praised childhood, youth, and manhood, and denounced
Old age alone as barren of all joy.
Decisive proof that men had left behind
The happiness they sought, and taken a most
Erroneous path; since every step they took
Was deeper mire."

SOLILOQUY OF A YOUNG PERSON EMERGING INTO ADULT LIFE WITHOUT PIETY.

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud nor blossom showeth."

MILTON.

I AM now at mature age. The season of preparation has passed, the season of action has come. The heart swells with the proud consciousness of being—what I have so long desired to be—a man. The world looks bright before me, and the mind is animated by the thought of reaching some honorable station in it. The very career of effort by which I am to attain that station seems inviting to the courage and sanguine feeling of my youthful nature. The age at which I have arrived is not a period of reflection and retrospection, but rather of hope and enterprise.

Yet thoughts will occasionally flit over me, that overshadow somewhat the opening scene. Some memories of the past will come up, like the ghost of Samuel to Saul. I have myself had some experience of disappointment already, and I cannot help observing that men in more mature and busy life, even where they seem to be most prospered, look

more serious and care-worn than young persons. Who is there, in fact, among them all that when you come to know him well, is not found to carry some thorn in his bosom? I find, too, that they all look back to their youth as the happiest part of life. Does it not seem strange at least that we who are younger should be looking forward, with eager desire and high expectation, to that stage of life through which those persons are now passing, while they are looking back from it, with sighs and regrets, to the one from which we are now emerging?

And then religion, if it has the claims which it seems to have, must, at some time or other, receive my serious attention; and I cannot help feeling slight compunctions at times for not having attended to it in my childhood or early youth, as some of my acquaintances have done, who at least seem not to regret it. Nor am I free from anxiety when I remember that I am now passing beyond those years in which we generally see the beginnings of piety, and that the means and influences which have led to the conversion of so many of my young Christian friends have failed of this end with me! And have I not sometimes thought—have I not sometimes even promised my conscience and my God, that by the time I should arrive at my present age, I would begin a different course. How much have I approximated to it?

In early life I put off this matter until I should be older; and the opinions which a large proportion of my Christian friends seemed practically to hold did much to encourage the idea that it would at last

suit better for me to take a decided stand when I should grow more nearly to adult age; for the most of them did not appear to attach much consequence to the religious feelings of my childhood, or to have much expectation of their bearing fruit. But have I become more thoughtful of my higher duties and interests? Have I even as much sensibility on these subjects as I had then?

A great and wide space seems to lie between me and my former religious state; and I think almost as of the "dim visions" of a dream, of the time when I read my Bible with some regularity, when I could not go to bed without prayer, and when I felt the Sabbath to be too holy even for trifling conversation or miscellaneous reading.

REFLECTIONS OF AN UNGODLY PERSON AT MIDDLE AGE LOOKING BACK ON HIS PAST YEARS.

"The telescope is turned.
Time, in advance, behind him hides his wings
And seems to creep, decrepit with his age;
Behold him when past by, what then is seen
But his broad pinions swifter than the winds!"

"Our waking dreams are fatal. How I dreamt
Of things impossible."

"Past hours,
If not by guilt, yet wound us by their flight."

"My days are like the yellow leaf;
The bowers and fruit of love are gone,
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."
(BYRON, in the review of life.)

PAST forty! One half of the longest life already gone from me!

How little did I think, when I was young, that I should get to my present age without becoming a Christian! And yet it is so. I once flattered myself that I would find, in the sober thoughtfulness of manhood, something that would favor such a change, and I had some hopes that I might be led

to form connexions in life, the influence of which would be on the same side.

But has this come true with me? Has not the course of things, in fact, been almost entirely in the other direction? Being destitute of piety myself, I have most naturally fallen in the way of ungodly associations and connexions of every sort; or rather kept myself in that way, since I never was in any other;—and with the tastes and feelings which I have always had, it would have required with me strong motive and effort to enter into friendships and alliances with any but irreligious persons. The operation of things, therefore, in this respect, has been the very reverse of what I permitted myself to hope for.

And if I have become more sober, I have also become more worldly than when I was a youth. The cares of life have multiplied upon me, with every passing year, till now they seem scarcely to allow me time to bestow any reflection upon subjects which I once thought, and which I cannot even now deny to be, so important. When I have been successful in business, it has led me to enlarge my plans, while, on the other hand, the failures and disappointments I have met with have always filled my mind with new anxieties, and spurred me on to more desperate exertion.

Where shall this end? I have fallen into the drift of a tide, that seems even now to be almost resistless, while it is rolling stronger and wearing a deeper channel the further it flows. And if pride and a regard for the opinions of the world restrained

me from following my conscience when I was young. I find that they do not exercise a less powerful influence over me now. In fact, I have taken my station in society; and if religion did not demand an entire change in my pursuits, it would, at least, have to work a great revolution in my relations to all around me. Indeed, I have become habituated to my present course of life. I am obliged to say that I like it, and like it better the longer I am accustomed to it. My tastes are becoming in a greater degree assimilated to those of the world around me, and I find myself more and more dissevered, every year I live, from the religious part of the community.

This brings to my mind the fact that I have now fewer pious friends than I once had. I have not made new friends of this class; while a good many that I had in the former part of my life have dropped off. I can remember some of these whose very presence impressed me with a sense of religion, and I could myself scarcely help feeling when they died, that part of my hope of salvation was gone.

What have I gained, by postponing this matter from early to more advanced life? When I do, at any distant intervals, bring my mind to look at the question of becoming a Christian, it seems so difficult that I am glad to get rid of the subject; and yet something whispers that it ought not to be so. How foolish was I, if religion is indispensable, not to seek it while I was young. How much better off, as I now see, are they who "remember their Creator in the days of their youth!"

GLOOMY THOUGHTS OF AN AGED MAN STILL LIVING IN AN UNCONVERTED STATE.

"How richly were my noon-tide trances hung
With gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys!"

"And is it in the flight of three-score years
To push eternity from human thought?"

"Souls that have long despised their heavenly birth,
For three-score years employed with ceaseless care,
In catching smoke and feeding upon air,
Conversant only with the ways of man,
Rarely redeem the short remaining ten."

"Oh, the dark days of vanity, while here
How tasteless! and how terrible when gone!"

My seventieth birth-day! And have I indeed attained the three-score and ten? How well can I remember the time when such a length of years seemed almost interminable! Now, I have reached it,—passed it. And how rapidly,—how very rapidly has time fled away! How long, in prospect—how short, in its reality! Every year has seemed of briefer duration than the one that went before it, and the wheels of time have rolled more and more rapidly, the further I have advanced and the less of life was left.

Where are those that began the world with me? When I look around I see scarce any left, and where I find one, I behold him tottering and ready to sink under the weight of years. I seem to linger far behind the generation to which I belonged. I am the last survivor on a sinking vessel; but a foot of plank is left to stand upon. The next wave will bury me for ever beneath the deep waters.

I am really growing old—very old,—hard as it is for me to believe it. And how much of life is there yet to come? The thought startles me when I ask myself if all that has gone by has passed so quickly, how long will it take me to get to the end, even if I reach eighty or ninety years? I must be standing on a very narrow verge. And when I look around, all that I see reminds me of the same fact.

Yes, much as I dislike to entertain the thought, in a very few years I must die. Once I could put death far off, because it was then possible for me still to live many years. Now I necessarily have but a small remnant of time left.

Yet, with all this, I seem to feel far less about death, and what is to come after, than I once did. I can recall the time when my mind was very much alive to the influence of religion; when I wept under appeals from the pulpit, and trembled at the thought of death. In my earlier days I thought of old age as a period of sober consideration. But, now that I am actually drawing near to the last limits of life —getting to the point to which I used to look forward with so much of solemn thought, I am constrained to confess that I feel less than I ever did—

far less than I did when I was young. It is a fact that cannot but strike me as curious, that while I have been getting older, and of course getting out of life, the world has been growing larger to my eyes.

If there is an eternal state, the confines of which I am now approaching, it is still very certain that I am more attached to this world than I ever was. I have never loved money so much, or been so taken up with worldly things as now.

As to the concerns of another world, I do not feel, —indeed it seems to me that I cannot feel now, as I see other people do, and as I once did. My mind appears, like the muscles of my body, to be growing more rigid and cold with age. Indeed I seem, at times, to lose all sense of religion, and am almost brought to think that it is wholly an illusion.

The objects of life which engaged my attention when I was young have most of them in a great measure lost their attractions, and the ties I once felt to be the strongest have nearly all been broken, but no new ties, no new objects of attraction draw me to another and better world. Whatever may be my need of religion, so far from growing more in love with it, I feel an increasing distaste for it the longer I live.

I have not entirely forgotten a warning that ministers and pious friends used to give me. There comes, at times, a thought, like a dreadful whisper from another world, that I may have sinned away my day of grace, and that all this want of sensibility may proceed from my being abandoned of

God. Those who once manifested a particular concern for my spiritual welfare are, almost all of them, dead and gone, while the pious by whom I am now surrounded, seem, for some cause, seldom to think any longer of praying for me. I feel, when I do think of it, as if mountains, that could never be passed, had grown up in the path that would lead me to God.

It is fearful to look forward, even if there is room to doubt the truth of the Bible. But I find that the more I think on the subject, the more I feel the reality of what it tells me.

And then it affords me no satisfaction to look back. All my enjoyments are gone, and the property I possess, which now I seem to cling to more than anything else, will soon be taken from my grasp. Whatever there may be to be done for another world, I have left it all undone. It will be hard for me to undertake it now. Would that I had decided the matter long ago! Better that my life should even have terminated with my youth, if I had but died as I saw some of my young friends leave the world, who with their last breath testified to the excellency of religion, and exhorted me to follow their example and "remember my Creator in the days of my youth." When I stand by their graves and think of them, how much better off do they seem to be, though so early taken away, than I am who still survive, and whom most people would think happy in having lived so long!

PLEASANT AND GRATEFUL THOUGHTS OF AN AGED CHRISTIAN REVIEWING A LIFETIME SPENT FROM EARLY YOUTH IN GOD'S FEAR AND SERVICE.

"Whose yesterdays look backward with a smile."

"In sacred memory lives
The morn of life, first morn of endless days:
Most joyful morn! nor yet for naught the joy;
A being of eternal date commenced."

"The Christian had this one advantage more,
That when his earthly pleasures failed, and fail
They always did to every soul of man,—
He sent his hopes on high."

[THE last picture showed us an evening of dreary shadows, its sun setting behind dark clouds that flash lightning and mutter thunder. This will introduce us to a different scene—the evening calm and serene, the shadows lengthening indeed, but all nature smiling, and the heavens lit up with the unearthly glories of a clear sunset.]

Life—what they call the longest life—what I used to think so very, very long—now almost gone! Who would have thought that I should travel over this space so quickly? My youth, my very childhood are before me as a vivid picture of yesterday.

The fireside, the yard, the garden, of my paternal home, the spring, the road to school, the forms of my parents, the faces of my playmates—I see them all as if yet before me, and I can scarce persuade myself that I am not still a little boy and in the midst of those scenes! It is only by recalling events which have intervened, that I am able, in any degree, to bring back the impression of my having numbered so many years.

In looking over the past, I have to mourn that my life, so prolonged, in God's mercy, above what is common, has not been better spent—that I have done so little for the kingdom and glory of Christ, and the good of the world in which I have been spared to live to so unusual an age. But, O my God, I thank Thee, as thy chief mercy to me, that I was so early led to the Saviour. I thank Thee,—now that I am old, I thank Thee still—for that praying father, that saintly mother, whose faces and persons have not yet faded from my memory.

Many, alas! too many of those I knew in early years, have died without a part in Christ,—some in life's vernal season, some in its prime. A few yet linger, hoary and hardened in sin. I, too, might so have lived, so have died. Thanks to the grace that preserved me from so living or dying!

I have never been sorry for anything that I have done in the service of God. My only regrets are that I have shown no more of devotion to it. How sweet now, while all that this world affords is failing me, the recollection of my early Christian days! Those Sabbaths, those walks to church, the Bible I read,

the sacred songs I sang—all embalmed in the cherished associations and glowing affections of that spring-time of my existence:—could the world ever have given me anything worth half so much as the memory of these?

Life has fled fast. There is little of it left. But, except for the waste of time and opportunities, I have no reason to be troubled on account of the nearness of its end. He who has "taught me from my youth," who from my youth has been "my hope and my trust," and whose wondrous works of mercy to me "I have hitherto declared," will "not forsake me now when I am old and grey-headed" (Ps. lxxi. 5, 17, 18)*—I testify His strength to save and power to bless, and would leave a record of them for those who "are to come" after me.

"I can declare His goodness to my soul. I long for His salvation. I bless His name that I have long since found Him, and shall die rejoicing in Him. Oh, blessed be God that I was born! Oh, that I was where He is! I have many kindred and friends in heaven, and I shall soon be added to their company. Oh, there is a telling in this Providence, and I shall be telling it for ever. If there has been such a glory in His conduct towards me all along through life, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne? Blessed be God that ever I was born!"†

* The late Dr. A. Alexander, being requested by a young friend to write in her album, wrote the words contained in the two last of these verses.

† Nearly the exact words of Halyburton, in the review of life.

REMORSE OF A YOUTH DYING WITHOUT A CHRISTIAN HOPE.

"What pain to quit the world just made their own!"

"It is the knell of my departed hours."

"A moment we may wish
When worlds want wealth to buy."

What did they say? It cannot be true;—Oh, I cannot, cannot die! Why did they not tell me sooner? Oh cruelty not to give me the warning of a few days, or even a few hours! I marked the gathering seriousness of physicians and friends as they came to examine my case, but I never thought they would let me leave the world upon so short a notice. All eternity crowding upon this breaking verge of time. It is too late. I am undone for ever! And is this all of life to me,—all of what I had hoped for, dreamed of, and now find I have sold heaven for? Die even before I go forth to act a man's part?

Ye Christians, whom I now see weeping by my last bed, why did you not tell me of this? Those of you who did, why not tell me oftener and more earnestly? Why did you not besiege my sin-entrenched conscience night and day? Why let me

have any rest, when you saw me continually in such peril? Ministers of God, why did you not even follow me from your pulpits, or arrest me, wherever you met me, to forewarn me of such an end?

But let me not reproach others. The fault is my own. It is all my own,—mine as it can be no other person's. The blame would have been on me had ministers, had pious teachers, friends, been far more cold and careless and neglectful of my case than any of them have been. This, oh this it is, more than anything else, that gives death its sting and invests judgment and an approaching eternity with such horrors. I feel the shadows of that endless night already coming over my spirit.

And was no signal of danger given me? Have I not heard of this, long since, as my possible and even approaching doom? Was it not a part of the first lesson that I learned from a venerable father, now himself gone,—the last that I was reminded of by my mother in her own dying hour? The old Bible of the family whose leaves I turned over when I was a child, and that one bestowed as a gift of parental love; sermons, communion seasons, revival scenes, conversions of young companions around me, my own sicknesses and afflictions, solemn and tender thoughts under preaching, at funerals, and on lying down at night;—death-beds, oh, some the very counterpart of mine,—the picture of what I was coming to, drawn before my very eyes;—a father's last prayer for me, as life itself, with him, breathed out;—a mother's last, last kiss, as she drew me to

the bedside, to give me her dying embrace,—her face,—its paleness startled me, but all a mother's soul was in those eyes! That image, it has stood there enstamped on my memory ever present to me, ever calling me back to God and heaven, as I wandered further away;—oh, it haunts me now! Shall it haunt me for ever? Father, mother! well it is for you that you are not here, to see your child die thus; well for you that you were taken when you were; it was in mercy to you. Was it in judgment to me for my impenitence and resistance? And those words of a divine message, hung out over all my youthful path, "Remember, remember now,"—

Yes, I was fully, fully forewarned. Fool! madman! I have pulled down everlasting perdition on my own head.

Days of my childhood and youth, golden days of instruction and opportunity! Could tears, and sighs, and cries of agony recall you! But no, life's morning, its sweet morning, is fled! I have wasted, worse than wasted it. Oh, could I be for one hour, where I so often was,—almost at heaven's gate, as now seems to me,—at that father's, mother's household prayers—under the pastor's calls—in the Sunday-school class, by the side of my young Christian companions, or at the place where the youthful inquirers met;—worlds, oh worlds ——

MEDITATIONS AT THE GRAVE-STONE OF A FRIEND WHO DIED AFTER A YOUTH OF PIETY.

A HOPELESS youthful death, such as we have just been contemplating, is a sudden and awful eclipse of life's early day. In what follows we shall see a morning, soft and lovely in itself, filled with sweet airs, the perfume of flowers and the songs of birds, exchanged for the fadeless glories of the celestial day.

"When faith and love, which parted from thee never,
Had ripened thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign the earthly load
Of death, called life, which us from life doth sever
Thy works, and alms, and all thy good endeavor
Stayed not behind, nor in the grave were trod,
But, as faith pointed with her golden rod,
Followed thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and faith, who knew them best
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beam
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest
And spake the truth of thee, on glorious themes
Before the judge; who thenceforth bid thee rest
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams."

(MILTON—*on the Death of a Pious Female Friend*).

How small a sum of years does this tablet tell of! To live not even a score of them and then die—what a brief lifetime! It seems—our acquaintance and intercourse—like some sweet dream, that passes soon, too soon away!

That juvenile form and face, that countenance illuminated, as it seemed so constantly to be, with a love and kindness and peace that did not belong even to other young faces; the picture stands fresh in my memory, and will as long as I live. Our pleasant walks and talks—our common enjoyment of our recreations and of nature's beauties, of flowers and the song of birds, of the charms of music, of entertaining books, of social pleasures;—but this was not all, or the most, that made that friendship and that friend so dear. Rather was it the Bible which I saw daily taken out and read—the bedside prayers which made me feel that God was near to us—the Sabbaths, when that young face seemed to beam with a more than usual holy peace,—the words of kind monition dropped from time to time—the lines from that familiar hand, or the tracts and good books, sent on the same kind errand. These, oh, these are what have most contributed to endear and hallow the memory of our youthful intercourse.

Friend of my early days! shall I meet thee in heaven? God sent thee to draw me there! That farewell was not for ever. Thou art separated from me, but not lost to me, O loved one! The sweet ties of our early friendship are not broken. Thou seemest indeed still near to me.

This spot is one on which I love to linger. Where the mortal part sleeps of those who die in Jesus, and especially of one young like thee, nature seems to wear its sweetest smile. The verge of such a grave is like the verge of heaven.

Thou wast early taken, dear friend;—it seemed too early. Thy life in its close appeared to thee to have been short,—and much shorter was it than thou hadst once dreamed it would be. The world, as thou saidst, still looked bright to thine eyes. It had many objects in it that were dear to thy heart, and they never were dearer than then. Many hopes for the future hadst thou cherished. Thou seemedst to thyself to be but just entering upon the path of Christian usefulness.

And so we too had thought. Thy heart panted to do something high and noble for Christ and for a lost world. But the Master took thee at thy word. He gave thee the crown and spared thee the labor. And though ready to serve Him here, thou didst joyfully obey His call. Thou hast risen to a higher service than that which our hopes had marked out for thee on earth.

How much of toil and trouble, of temptation and sin hast thou perhaps escaped, by such a speedy release! How safe now with Him in whom thou didst put thy early trust, to whom thou didst give thy early affections! How happy in His nearer communion and more exalted service! Of what priceless value that devotion of thy youthful life to Him! How much is it worth now, in the celestial reminiscences of it, and in its fruits of eternal joy!

How happy, in life and in death, are they who "remember their Creator in the days of their youth."

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."